



THE INDEPENDENT

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BBC quizzed Diana over Bashir 'fake'

Check on Panorama reporter

CHRIS BLACKHURST

The Princess of Wales was dragged into a BBC inquiry into the journalistic methods employed by Martin Bashir to secure his sensational Panorama interview with her last November.

The Princess, the Independent can reveal, was asked by senior corporation officials whether she had seen documents faked by Mr Bashir, purporting to show a former employee of her brother, Earl Spencer, was selling information about the Spencer family.

The existence of the inquiry, which was known only to a handful of senior executives, and the questioning of the Princess, show how seriously BBC and Panorama management took suspicions raised by Panorama journalists about the granting of the interview to Mr Bashir, not a well-known figure.

Panorama journalists suggested that Mr Bashir fed Earl Spencer's suspicions that his family were being spied on by the security services, which led to the interview with the Princess. This formed the basis of the internal inquiry in which Mr Bashir was cleared.

Mr Bashir had been preparing a programme to highlight the security services' activities in relation to the Royal Family. As one of the illustrations for that programme, the BBC confirmed last night, he had two faked bank statements made up by one of the Corporation's graphic artists.

One statement showed a payment from News International, the newspaper group, to Alan Waller, former head of security for Earl Spencer. The other showed a payment to Mr Waller of £5,000 from a mysterious offshore company, Penfolds Consultants.

Mr Bashir's colleagues realised Penfolds, a genuine company, had featured in an earlier programme Mr Bashir made for Panorama on the business dealings of Terry Venables, the England football manager.

They questioned why the same company should feature in both programmes, one about Mr Venables, the other about the role of the Prince and Princess of Wales.

BBC executives then began an inquiry into whether the faked documents had been used to secure the world exclusive interview with Princess Diana. It has been suggested that it was Mr Bashir's warm relationship with Earl Spencer which

eventually led to him securing the interview. BBC sources said they had received three conflicting accounts from BBC management. The first was that Penfolds Consultants had changed hands since the Panorama about Mr Venables. The second was that Mr Bashir had stumbled across a genuine offshore company but inserted the name Penfolds



What the Princess told her interviewer
"Everything changed after we separated, and life became very difficult then for me... By visits abroad being blocked, by things that had come naturally my way being stopped, letters going, that got lost, and various things... My husband's side were very busy stopping me."



consultants. The third was that it was a graphic representation of a genuine statement. Earl Spencer's suspicions about Mr Waller were well known. In March 1994 he obtained a High Court order preventing Mr Waller from disclosing information about the private lives of the Earl, his wife, children, or members of the Royal Family.

Estate in Northamptonshire. Mr Bashir approached Earl Spencer about a wide-ranging programme concerning the state of the monarchy, and including the role of MIs.

In her Panorama interview, the Princess of Wales spoke of how "life became very difficult" when she and the Prince had separated.

This manifested itself, she said, "by visits abroad being blocked, by things that had come naturally my way being stopped, letters going, that got lost, and various things."

She said that she had "no idea" how the so-called Squirey Tape of her conversation with friend, James Gilbey, became public, but "it was done to harm me in a serious manner."

Afterwards, the Minister for the Armed Forces, Nicholas Soames MP, a friend of the Princess of Wales, accused the Princess of "instability and mental illness... I cannot account for what she was talking about who she referred to mail interception and telephones being tapped. It really is the advanced stages of paranoia."

A BBC spokesman said last night that an inquiry had been held "two to three months ago" into whether the documents had been used to secure an interview with the Princess. This inquiry, said the spokesman, "culminated in an assurance from Princess Diana that she had never seen these documents."

The inquiry, said the spokesman, had cleared Mr Bashir. He has since won numerous awards for his scoop and earned substantial royalties for the Corporation in worldwide television rights.

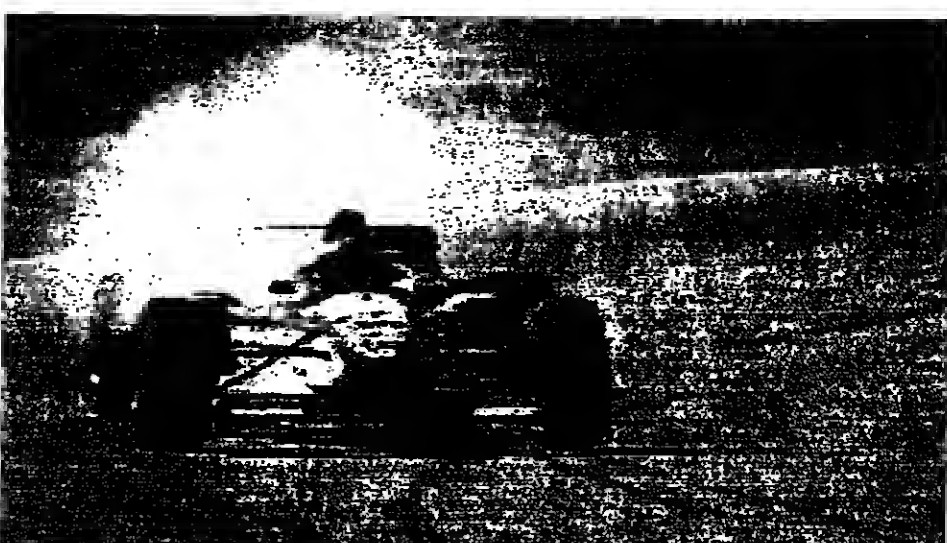
Asked if Mr Bashir had shown the faked documents to Earl Spencer during the preparations for the programme on the Royal Family, the spokesman said: "I don't know. All I know for certain is that they weren't used to secure an interview with Diana."

The spokesman said that the bank statements had been prepared in connection with Mr Bashir's investigation into the Royal Family and the security services. He admitted that they were false bank statements.

"The explanation for the documents is that they were set up as graphic representations but elements of them could not be substantiated. They were fake documents," he said.

The spokesman was unable to explain, however, why the name Penfolds Consultants had been used.

Don't ask about the 'no-claims bonus'...



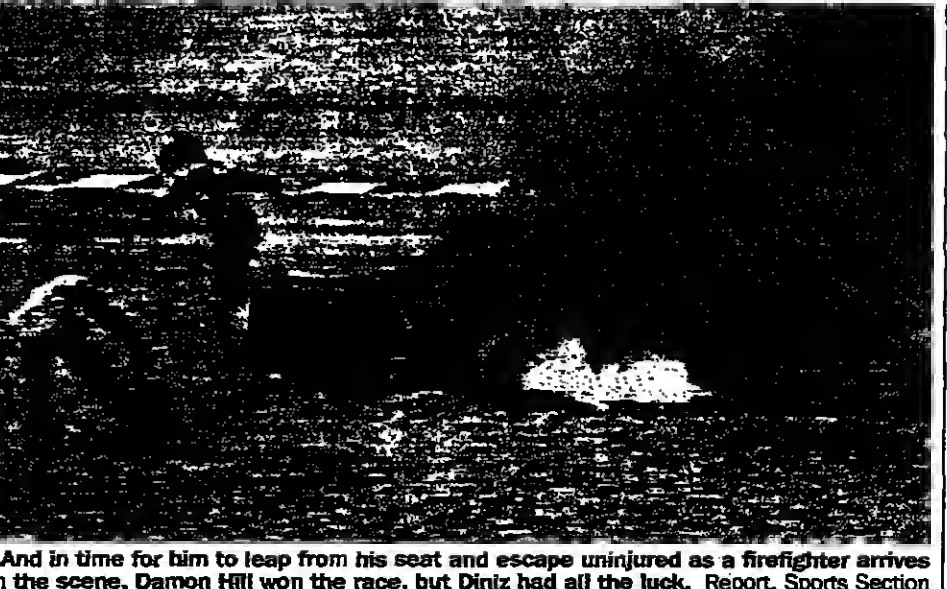
Hot wheels: As his car bursts into flames during the 26th lap of the Argentine Grand Prix...



...Brazilian Formula One driver Pedro Diniz makes it on to the grass beside the track...



...before his Ligier-Honda car grinds to a halt and is completely engulfed in flames...



...And in time for him to leap from his seat and escape uninjured as a firefighter arrives on the scene. Damon Hill won the race, but Diniz had all the luck. Report, Sports Section

Righteous indignation over Blair

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, was yesterday facing a concerted Tory attack as a premature bout of spring election fever was triggered by remarks in which the Labour leader explicitly linked his opposition to Conservatism to his values as a Christian.

Tory Ministers and MPs queued up to denounce Mr Blair, a practising Anglican, for an Easter newspaper article which they lost no time in claiming asserted that Conservatism was incompatible with Christianity.

As Conservative backbenchers accused Mr Blair of "sanctimoniousness", the Home Office minister Ann Widdecombe, a Roman Catholic convert, accused Mr Blair of pursuing the distinctly secular goal of "self-interest in the pursuit of power" and declared that the Labour leader "is not the right man to lecture us on religious morals".

In the article which enraged Tories - all the more so because it appeared in the traditionally pro-Conservative Sunday Telegraph - Mr Blair declared: "My views of Christian values led me to oppose what I perceived to be a narrow view of self-interest that Conservatism - particularly its more modern Right wing form - represents."

The Labour leader heavily qualified his point by making clear his dislike of politicians who wore "God on their sleeves", that he did not regard himself as less "selfish than anyone else" and that he was not saying that "Christians should only vote Labour".

But he added: "Every human being is self-interested. But Tories, I think, have too selfish a definition of that self-interest. They fail to look beyond to the community and the individual's relationship with the community. That is the essential reason why I am on the left rather than on the right."

Miss Widdecombe retorted yesterday: "I think it is a bit rich of Tony Blair to accuse the Conservatives of narrow self-interest which is incompatible with Christianity when every single thing the Labour Party has done over the last three years has been undoubtedly self-interest in the pursuit of power."

But the Venerable George Austin, the independent-minded Archdeacon of York, revealed himself as a Labour supporter in the next election and declared that Tory MPs were creating a "storm in a teacup" over the article. He said Mr Blair had not been saying "that you couldn't be a Tory and a Christian. He was arguing that Christianity had swayed him against the extreme right wing and Marxism."

The Archdeacon of York said he welcomed Tony Blair's comments about faith and politics and revealed he would be voting for Labour at the next election.

More angry Tories later added their voices to the chorus of protest about the "sanctimonious" Mr Blair. Dame Jill Knight (Edgborough) said: "It has always seemed to me that when politicians feel they must claim Christian principles as a reason why people should vote for them, which is precisely what Mr Blair is doing, they have abandoned moral thought themselves."

"Christianity is above and beyond party politics. I remember Jimmy Carter in the United States trying exactly the same trick, but people found out how hollow it all was. In the whole of my political life, I have never thought it right to claim that because I held Christian principles was a reason why people should vote for me."

Michael Fabre (Mid-Staffordshire) commented: "Tony Blair becomes more sanctimonious as the election approaches. He now not only sees himself as Prime Minister but as Archbishop of Canterbury as well."

IN BRIEF

Muslim massacre

"The bodies, stripped of their flesh by marauding animals, are scattered on a hilltop where they fell. All had been Muslims fleeing the nearby UN 'safe haven' of Srebrenica as the Bosnian Serb Army advanced."

The forgotten victims, Page 10

Inquiry demand

Welsh MPs are demanding an open inquiry following revelations that Ceredigion county council had voted to suppress a report into abuse in its children's homes.

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Today's weather

Cloudy in the west, sunshine elsewhere Section two, page 21



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Schools back Blunkett on private cash plan

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Members of Britain's biggest teaching union yesterday gave a warm reception to David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, as he promised to remedy decades of neglect of crumbling school buildings.

Mr Blunkett's reception was in sharp contrast to that given on Saturday to Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, by the National Union of Teachers and to his own at last year's conference, when he was jostled by left-wing militants.

In a forceful and effective speech, he outlined plans for a new partnership between the private and public sector to

deal with a backlog of repair work on schools, recently calculated to amount to £3.2bn.

Teachers' leaders immediately questioned whether Labour would raise taxes to finance building improvements if the new scheme failed to generate enough money.

Labour is talking to a number of banks, including Hambros, about a scheme under which a group of schools would form a consortium - together with a leader - to organise and administer borrowing for building work.

Banks, which are currently reluctant to lend money to individual schools under Government plans to allow opted-out schools to borrow against their assets, have told

Labour that its scheme is much more attractive as it would entail dealing with several schools at once.

And the scheme would enable them to charge lower interest on loans because - as they would be part of the consortium themselves - they would benefit from efficiency savings on the reduced cost of managing the refurbished buildings. For example, temporary classrooms, which are expensive to heat, would be replaced.

Local authorities would hand over money earmarked for maintenance to meet interest on the loans.

Mr Blunkett said: "There will be no dramatic shift followed by retrenchment."

TURN TO PAGE 2

All quiet on the Western line

PAUL FIELD

The irritant with the booming voice who is late for dinner, apologetic because he is going through a tunnel and whose line is breaking up, is no more.

At least not in the rear coach of a Great Western Railway train. The rail operator has banned mobile phones from one carriage of all its daytime services between London and the West Country.

The reasoning behind the move is that while to some they are vital for business and arranging a hectic social life, to most they are nuisance. Especially for those trying to work, take in the scenery or snooze.

Great Western has designated one of the eight coaches on each service a mobile-free zone.

Called business standard class, it aims to offer passengers a quiet environment. Personal stereos are also barred from the coaches, which are at the ends of the trains to avoid the annoyance of other passengers walking through.

Spokesman Ross Mackie believes most travellers know where mobile phone users should make their calls. "The best place is in the toilet. It is certainly quiet in there."

He said the service, launched last month and at no extra cost, is proving so popular that its three-month trial period is likely to be extended. "Initial reaction has been very popular but we have not had people fighting for seats. People on Great Western services are far too respectable to fight," he added.

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news

Whose hands to trust education to?

Just 12 months ago, the number of education policies on which the political parties agreed was still growing. Not any more. The election is coming and all political parties are busy proving that they have distinctive policies on schools to offer voters.

On Saturday, Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, spoke to the National Union of Teachers' conference. Yesterday, it was the turn of Labour's David Blunkett and today the Liberal Democrats' Don Foster will take the podium.

What's on offer?

Selection

The Conservatives want more of it. They have promised a White Paper in June which may give all schools the right to decide their own admissions policies and fulfil the Prime Minister's ambition of a grammar school in every town. At present, most schools' admission policies are decided by local authorities.

Labour wants less of it. There will be no legislation abolishing the remaining 161 grammar schools but parents in each area will be allowed to vote on whether to keep them.

Since around 80 per cent of children will not get into grammar schools, many parents may calculate that they are better off without them.

The Liberal Democrats are also opposed to more selection. They say local authorities should decide what happens to the remaining grammar schools.

Opted-Out Schools

The Conservatives want more of them. There is a battle in the party over whether opting out should be compulsory for all secondary schools or whether schools should just get more control over their budget. At present, parents have to vote for a school to opt out.

This is a tricky issue for Labour since both the party's leader, Tony Blair, and Harriet Harman, health spokeswoman, have children at opted-out schools. Labour



would stop financial bribes to such schools and offer them the choice of becoming "foundation" schools which would have some local-authority governors. They would also be required to have fair admissions policies agreed with local authorities.

The Liberal Democrats would go further and bring all opted-out schools back under local-authority control.

Private Schools

The Conservatives are increasing the amount of public money spent in fee-paying schools by doubling the assisted-places scheme which pays for bright children from poor homes to attend fee-paying schools. Children as young as five will become eligible for the scheme for the first time.

Labour would abolish the scheme and spend the money saved on reducing class sizes for the youngest primary school children. The party is looking at ways of opening up more independent schools' facilities to the community.

The Liberal Democrats will consider proposals to abolish the scheme and extend the charitable status enjoyed by private schools to all schools at their autumn conference.

Nursery Education

Agreed by everybody to be a good thing, The Conservatives are promising £1.100 nursery vouchers for the parents of all four-year-olds from next April to be spent in local authority, private or voluntary nurseries or play groups. They say that vouchers will increase the number of places available.

Labour says that vouchers will mean chaos. They promise a "free entitlement" to nursery education for all four-year-olds and, at a later date, for three-year-olds.

The Liberal Democrats, like Labour, oppose vouchers and promise nursery education for three- and four-year-olds. Un-



Policy exchange: Labour's David Blunkett (right) with Doug McAvoy, NUT general secretary, at the union's conference yesterday. Photograph: Huw John

like Labour, however, they have said they will spend £900m to pay for it.

How They Will Pay

The Conservatives hope that private industry and commerce will contribute more. Grant-maintained schools will be able to borrow against their assets.

There are plans for all schools to compete with roads and housing for government "challenge" funding, with priority given to those which have raised some money from private sources.

Labour plans a new partnership between private and public finance under which groups of schools would borrow money from financial consortia. They are not promising more money for education until after they have formed a government and seen the state of public finances.

By contrast, the Liberal Democrats say they will spend an extra £20m on education and, if necessary, put a penny in the pound on income tax to pay for nursery education, better buildings, more books and more support for teachers.

Judith Judd

Labour's pledge on schools

FROM PAGE 1

There will be a decade of sustained year-on-year investment and improvement. It is time to put away buckets from under leaking roofs. It is time to heat classrooms and cool the atmosphere outside, to take away the paper from inside the rattling window frames.

The scheme, which means spending hundreds of millions of pounds on school buildings each year, is a development of proposals from John Prescott,

the party's deputy leader, for a public/private partnership to run the railways.

Mr Blunkett said the whole thrust of the scheme was that there would be no increase in the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. He won warm applause for his condemnation of selective schools and nursery vouchers, though militant delegates sat stone-faced and silent at the end of his speech.

Don Foster, the Liberal Democrats' Education spokesman,

will today call for a complete overhaul of the present system of school inspections.

He will tell the conference that bidding by privatised teams for contracts to inspect schools should be scrapped and Her Majesty's Inspectors should lead the teams. Schools should evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses and there should be more local authority advisers.

Delegates are to vote tomorrow on a motion that pupils benefit from having gay teachers

Glyndebourne TB alert 'Dirty tricks' claim over Blair trip

Glyndebourne, one of the most prestigious opera houses, has fallen victim to a tuberculosis alert, it emerged yesterday.

The local health authority demanded that more than 200 members of the opera house staff be tested for TB last week after five employees contracted the disease in three years.

A Glyndebourne spokeswoman insisted the scare had not thrown the company into disarray.

"The five TB cases we have had are all completely in the clear now, and all are back at work."

The testing was something the health authority recom-

mended as a precaution. Tests have shown that no one else has the disease," she said.

"The season will open as expected on 17 May. This incident won't affect us at all."

"As far as we're concerned it was a routine health and safety initiative," the spokeswoman added.

The TB cases were all members of the theatre's seasonal staff, working only during the summer months when the theatre is open. No opera singers were affected by the disease.

Glyndebourne, the favourite opera house of society figures, politicians and corporate

bankers, is known for its formal "black tie" dress code and for the lavish champagne picnics which appear during the interval on the lawns outside the auditorium.

The building stands in the grounds of a stately home in East Sussex and is an unlikely setting for an outbreak of TB—a disease traditionally associated with poor living conditions and abject poverty.

Dr Angela Iveson, public health consultant at East Sussex Health Authority, said yesterday: "Nobody there has TB at the moment, but we are making absolutely sure that the contact-tracing is complete."

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

A political row broke out yesterday over Labour claims that the Tory high command was mounting a "dirty tricks" operation vainly designed to undermine Tony Blair's trip to Washington this week by releasing to United States opinion formers a dossier of his alleged "un-American activities" since entering politics in the early Eighties.

The one-and-a-half-page paper rehearsed fairly routine charges against the Labour leader that he had for part of the Eighties been a member of

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, had criticised the US bombing of Tripoli in 1986, and had attacked the US's "evil campaign" against Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America as late as 1988.

The paper appears to have made little impression on the US commentators to whom it has been sent, with the *Wall Street Journal* reportedly describing it as "juvenile."

The move appeared to underline Tory anxieties that in contrast to the ill-starred trip to Washington before the 1987 election of his predecessor, Neil Kinnock, Mr Blair's carefully planned visit to New York

and Washington, culminating in talks with President Bill Clinton at the White House, is likely to receive favourable media attention both here and in the US.

Labour condemned the move as a "pathetic stunt" which breached the protocol that British politicians do not attack each other abroad. Central Office said it had merely borrowed a well-worn Labour tactic to provide sourced quotes for people "who are curious about how he has voted and why".

Mr Blair's visit to Washington coincides with the Tories' threatened defeat in Thursday's Staffordshire South East by-election and the opening in

earnest of the campaign for the local elections on 2 May, in which the Tories face the loss of up to another 500 seats.

The prospect of further election losses has sparked off another round of reshuffle speculation, with rumours that Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, is pressing for ministers such as Virginia Bottomley (Heritage) Douglas Hogg (Agriculture) and Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, to make way for more electorally driven replacements. But sources close to the Prime Minister remain adamant that Mr Major intends to take his present Cabinet into the general election.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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'A woman danced on the riverbank as Weir, garlanded in marigolds, sprinkled Garcia's ashes into the Ganges'

Grateful Dead rock star makes his last trip out of sight of Deadheads, writes **Tim McGirk** in New Delhi

What a long, strange trip it's been for Jerry Garcia, lead guitarist of the rock band the Grateful Dead, and recently dead himself. After last Thursday's lunar eclipse ended, and dawn broke on the upper Ganges, Garcia's wife, Deborah, and another member of the band, Bob Weir, waded out and released Garcia's ashes into the swirling, jade-green waters of India's sacred river.

A few peacocks shrieked from bushes on the far bank of the Ganges but, to the relief of the widow and Mr Weir, the sprinkling of Garcia's ashes was carried out in utmost secrecy. Garcia, who died at 53 of a heart attack, had been a fuzzy-bearded rock icon since the late Sixties, when the Grateful Dead emerged as the most innovative and durable band of the San Francisco psychedelic counter-culture.

Garcia's wife was worried that if word had leaked out back in the United States and in Europe about the ceremony, thousands of fans, nicknamed "Deadheads", might flock to India and muddy up the private offering. Even in the 80s and 90s, Deadheads worshipped the band as though they were

not mere musicians but tribal gods. Like pilgrims, the Deadheads followed the band everywhere, going to hundreds of concerts. Often high on LSD, some Deadheads grew convinced that while listening to the band's spacy jammings they had religious experiences - or communicated with UFOs. Garcia regarded the Deadheads' adoration as "a little silly". It was a stampede to India by this type of fan that Garcia's widow and fellow band member had wanted to avoid last Thursday when they entered the icy Ganges near Rishikesh, where the river flowed out of the Himalayas into the plains.

The other band members who stayed behind in California had written farewell messages to Jerry. According to witnesses, Mr Weir and Mrs Garcia - the guitarist's fourth wife - poured some of Garcia's ashes on each message before setting it adrift in the currents. Mr Weir's own paper was blank when he sprinkled on his best



friend's ashes. "May you have peace, Jerry, and travel to the stars," said Mr Weir, whose bare chest was garlanded with marigolds as he stood waist-deep in the Ganges.

Earlier, during the eclipse, Weir had picked up a guitar during the eclipse and began strumming a Grateful Dead tune, "Friend of the Devil", but grief welled up and he couldn't finish. He and Garcia had kept the Grateful Dead, one of the world's most successful rock

bands, together for more than 30 years. Garcia's wife, a filmmaker, read out a poem.

A woman named Molly who had been one of Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters, the pioneers of the "Acid-Test" happenings that turned on the West Coast to psychedelia in the Sixties, danced on the riverbank as Garcia's remains dissolved into the Ganges.

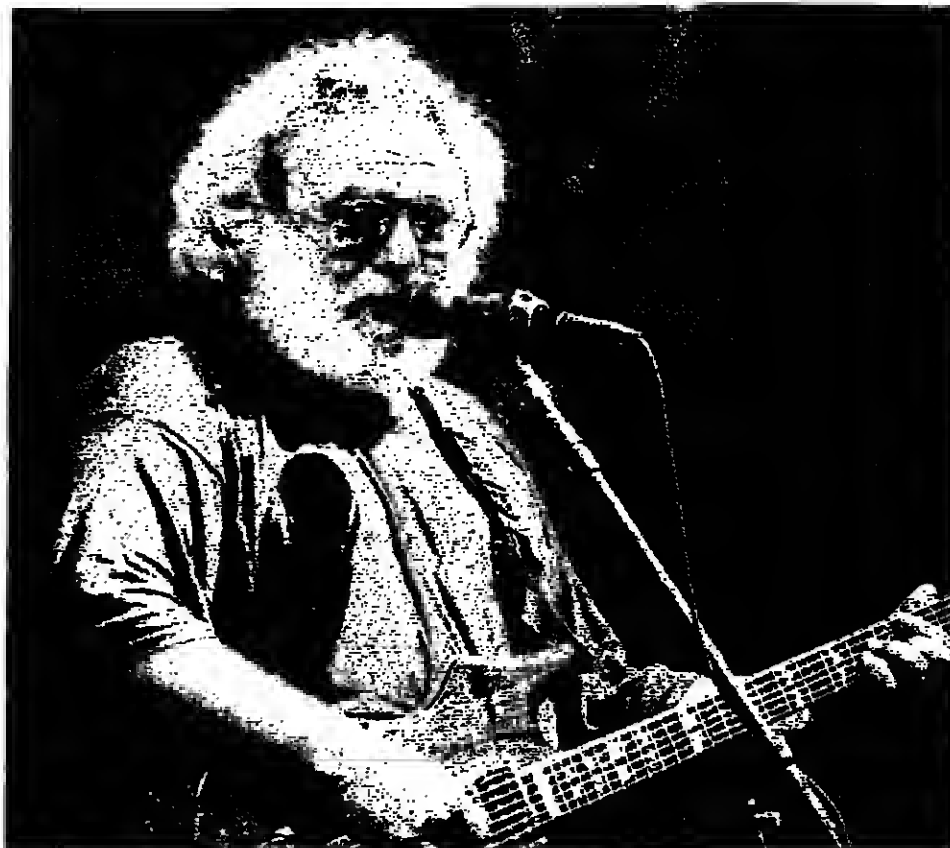
Garcia was cremated soon after his death last August but for Mr Weir that ceremony had been too public, too garish.

"That was for Jerry the star. Not for my brother," he said. The idea of sprinkling Garcia's ashes in the Ganges came to him in a dream. Weir said he dreamt of a smiling and gnomish-looking Garcia who was wearing purple robes, floating above a river. Mr Weir next dreamt of himself doused with paint that made him invisible before his dead friend. "Jerry was too humble a guy to ever say put my ashes in the river, but I knew that's what he meant," Mr Weir told a friend. "Jerry wasn't say-

ing anything in the dream, but he had that happy expression of his on his face." Weir took his suggestion to the other Dead members and to Garcia's wife, and they agreed.

Garcia - who gained the nickname Captain Trips because so many tripped-out hippies would turn to him for an interpretation of their acid-inspired hallucinations - once described himself as a Catholic who believed in reincarnation. During the band's early experiments with psychedelics, Garcia apparently had his share of bad trips. Among ex-wives and various other litigants trying to claim \$38m (£25m) from the dead musician's estate is one man who wants payment for the times that he chaperoned Garcia through fearful LSD trips.

After the immersion, Mr Weir, in his fifties, returned to Delhi. Waiting in a hotel for his flight back to the US, Mr Weir, with his short, grey hair, looked like a weary, middle-aged businessman who dreaded the grueling flight ahead of him. He did not want to talk to the press about Garcia's last, strange trip. "There's nothing to say - the Grateful Dead is over," Mr Weir said.



Gerry Garcia: Grateful Dead's lead guitarist who died last year

Photograph: AP

Feelgood factor: There are signs of an upturn in the high street and for Poole Town, the good times are back

Economic recovery finally under way

The Easter weather, it seems, does not reflect the mood in the country. According to the leisure industry and estate agents, fewer Britons are downcast about the economy.

As thousands took off for a break over the weekend, with Gatwick Airport reporting a 15 per cent increase on last Easter in the number of passengers flying abroad, people have had time to reflect on their spending power. And they might just have a bit more of it.

There are signs, albeit cautionary ones, of the "feelgood factor" returning, as tax changes announced last November come into force. Basic rate taxpayers can, on average, expect to gain an additional £15 a year. It's not a lot, but it adds up.

One possible indicator of renewed economic confidence is the number of golfers teeing off. At least 100 new clubs are expected to open within the next three years.

Membership of sports and fitness clubs is up and the tills are ringing at cinemas across the country. Even bingo halls are filling up - despite the impact of the National Lottery.

Another hopeful sign is the housing market. Estate agents took on extra staff at the week-

end in anticipation of an Easter influx.

Before the Easter break there was cheer for 4,500 people taken on as part-time staff at Tesco in a bid to set a new standard in its stores.

According to the English Golf Union, 430 new clubs have been built in the past six years, and the number of amateur golfers has risen from 674,260 in 1995 to 691,981.

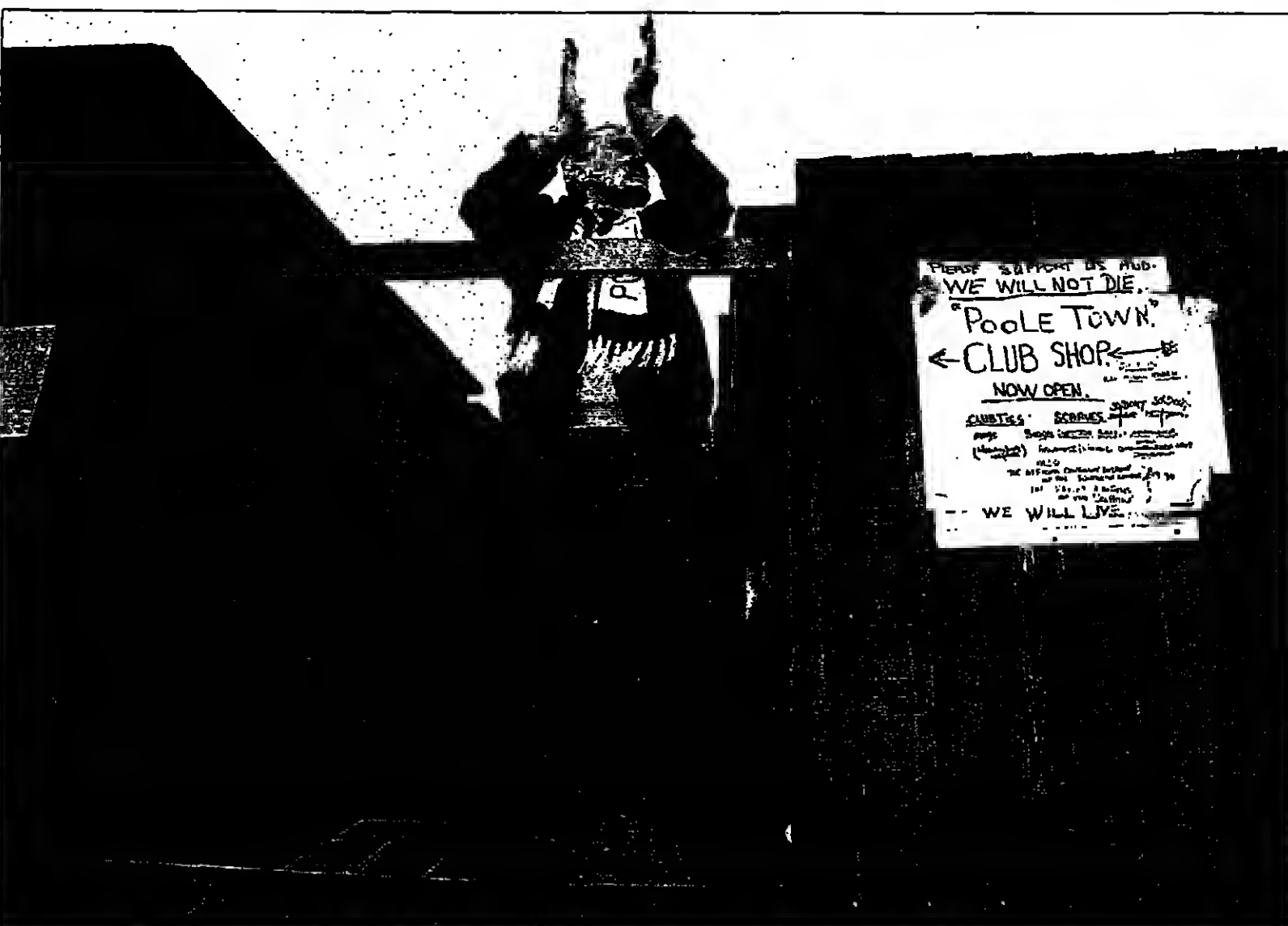
Colin Hegarty, of the Golf Research Group, said the industry hit rock bottom and was coming back up. "There is a lot more money around this year than last. Green-fee revenues are hitting record highs."

Rank Organisation, one of the largest leisure groups in the UK, is expected to report on a "feel-better factor" at its AGM on Wednesday.

A spokeswoman said: "We have been optimistic about the outlook for consumer spending."

She said bookings for Haven caravan parks and Butlins had increased in the run-up to the season. "The important thing is how much people spend once they get there."

However, the Association of British Travel Agents reported a slump in holiday bookings. "They are down by 25 per cent



Small mercies: Burt Parke outside the Poole Town Football Club shop yesterday. The team ended their run of 39 consecutive defeats with a 0-0 draw against Bournemouth yesterday. Another lost match would have put them in the Guinness Book of Records

Photograph: Newsteam

on this time last year, but Easter has sold well, particularly city breaks."

He explained that as most holidaymakers lacked economic confidence, they were booking at the last minute. Tour operators have had to cut back holidays by 1 million.

But a Lunn Poly spokes-

woman was more optimistic. "People will still book up and there has been an improvement since Christmas."

The most confident are estate agents. A study by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors reveals two-thirds of English and Welsh estate agents have had a 10 per cent increase in

viewing and valuation requests this year.

A spokesman for the National Association of Estate Agents, said the feelgood factor was definitely on the way, if the housing market was an indicator.

"It would not surprise at all if, over Easter, there has been

more viewing, more inquiries, more offers and hence more sales. Easter is traditionally the starting point," he said. "The market has been looking good over the last three months."

The most important boost for the housing market this year, besides cuts in the cost of borrowing, has been the maturity

of PEPs. Indeed, lenders are already considering reviewing their forecasts for 1996 in the light of the renewed demand. But estate agents do not want first-time buyers and house movers to feel too good. "We do not want a stampede because that would push prices up too high."

Family denied report into rail death

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

The family of an ecologist who died boarding a train at Oxford station is being refused the findings and recommendations of an internal railway industry inquiry into the death.

But the same procedures that appear to have contributed to his son Adrian's death in July last year appear still to be in force at the station, according to Dr Godfrey Fowler, a family doctor in Oxford and Reader in General Practice at the university.

The case is "a classic illustration of the need for a Freedom of Information Act," according to Maurice Frankel, director of the campaign for an act.

Dr Fowler's attempts to establish the report's findings have resulted in him being successively refused a copy by British Transport Police, Thames Trains, who run Oxford station, CrossCountry Trains who ran the train involved, the coroner who recorded a verdict of accidental death, and Sir George Young, the Secretary of State for Transport.

Dr Fowler said yesterday that the situation is both "extraordinary" and "quite unacceptable".

His regional Rail Users' Consultative Committee has also been refused copies. Sean O'Neill, its secretary, said the committee may press for the issue to be taken up nationally. "I do not see the reasons for this refusal. There are issues of public confidence at stake. They can only increase public unease."

Dr Fowler said yesterday: "We believe there should be a right to this information. Not only are we being denied information relating to the death of our son, but both we and other passengers need to know what the recommendations were and that they are being implemented."

"As far as I can see from visits to the station over the past six months, they have not been. On one occasion I saw what must have been an almost exact replication of what happened to my son - but in this case the passenger survived."

Adrian, 29, died boarding the 7.03 to Birmingham. As far as Dr Fowler can establish, the central locking mechanism appears to have operated as his son attempted to board the CrossCountry Train as it departed. As a result, he failed to board, fell and struck his head.

At the inquest, Dr Fowler learnt that the senior conductor who operates the mechanism and instructs the driver to start was at the front of the train and was therefore unable to see what was happening at the rear. At the inquest, he said, the conductor agreed that the accident might not have happened had he been at the rear. Dr Fowler says that conductors still clear trains for departure from the front.

A spokeswoman for Thames Trains told the Independent that the recommendations and findings of the inquiry were an internal matter and "not for the public to know".

Troubled school's head takes early retirement

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

The head of Britain's most troubled opted-out school is to retire at 50 on a package which will cost the taxpayer at least £115,000 over the next 10 years.

Anne Snelling, head of Stratford School in Newham, London, was appointed an OBE after a year-long dispute in which a group of Asian governors accused her of racism and assault. A year later, Stratford was the first grant-maintained school to be declared "failing" by schools inspectors. There were also revelations that it had a financial deficit of more than £100,000.

Ministers have twice imposed new governors on the school in an attempt to solve its deep-seated problems, and they seriously considered closing it before taking it off the "failing" list last December.

The school's new head will be paid £37,000, £5,000 more than the maximum usually paid in a school of this sort. Stratford says it has 614 pupils but its head's salary is sufficient for a school of twice the size.

Last night Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the



Anne Snelling: Made an OBE

National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers, said he was not surprised that Mrs Snelling had decided to go.

"The school should never have gone grant-maintained in the first place. I admired Mrs Snelling's efforts but I think the governing body has frankly not been up to the job," he said.

Mrs Snelling was appointed five years ago just after the under-subscribed school opted out in the face of a closure plan by Newham Council. She arrived to find just 180 pupils, 11 staff and buildings badly in need of repair.

Soon afterwards, the chairman of governors was replaced

by an Asian governor, Ghulam Shaiba. Relations with Mrs Snelling deteriorated to such an extent that she was suspended and the dispute ended in the courts, with Mr Shaiba accusing her of racism and assault.

The charges were dropped. Mr Shaiba left and Mrs Snelling was rewarded with the OBE, but the school's troubles did not end there. By the middle of 1993 it was embroiled in a financial crisis after running up a deficit of more than £100,000. Early in 1994 inspectors put it on the "failing" list, reporting low academic standards and unsatisfactory teaching.

Ministers have now given the school a clean bill of health but Mrs Snelling has decided to bow out. The standard pension for a head teacher is one-80th of his or her salary for each year of service - more than 20 years in Mrs Snelling's case. Because she is leaving early, she will receive an enhancement of at least four-80ths, plus a lump sum of three years' pension.

Mrs Snelling was not available for comment, but Jakob Umer, chairman of governors, said it was quite normal for head teachers to take early retirement at 50.

Return-trip warning for drivers

Holidaymakers returning home today from Easter breaks are being advised to leave early if they want to avoid traffic jams and hours of motorway misery.

Trouble spots are likely to include the M4 eastbound, the M3 and M5 northbound, the whole of the M25 and the M6 between junctions 20-21a and 28-9.

A spokeswoman for AA Roadwatch said: "We think tomorrow evening will bear the brunt of it."

"We're saying to people that it might be advisable to leave at lunchtime or mid-morning so the traffic is staggered."

The AA said traffic problems yesterday centred on car boot sales and Sunday markets with some congestion on roads leading to the Yorkshire coast.

Airports said they were also expecting a busy day today after a weekend of heavy travel. Both Gatwick and Heathrow said the number of people taking off last week had been up on last year.

A spokeswoman at Heathrow said the most popular destinations had been Florida, the Far East and the Eastern Mediterranean. "It makes a change from Dublin, Paris and Amsterdam," she said.

Carey urges: 'Open hearts to Resurrection'

The Resurrection's message of eternal hope is not just for the committed churchgoer but for all people, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey said yesterday.

"If we open our hearts to the Resurrection message, we too shall find ourselves surprised by joy," he said, referring to CS Lewis's book in which the writer told how he suddenly became convinced of the reality of God and the Resurrection of Christ.

Dr Carey said in his address in Canterbury Cathedral that he had recently studied the Resurrection stories again.

He said profoundly sceptical modern people wondered how they could have their beliefs about the very purpose of life on something so hopelessly improbable.

But reasons to believe the story included:

The Resurrection was totally unexpected, so the disciples could not have convinced themselves it had happened.

The story shows the male disciples in a poor light. No man had the courage to stand alongside their leader. "The women have too high a profile in a story in which men are supposed to have the central place. This

underlines the credibility of the narrative as a whole."

These dejected and humiliated disciples were suddenly transformed - because of the "staggering impact" of the Resurrection.

Jesus's Jewish followers took the extraordinary step of changing their holy day from Saturday to Sunday and calling it the Lord's Day. "Only something quite overwhelming could have led them to do so. We know what it was, for it has been spelled out in our Creeds from early Christian times: 'On the third day, he rose again from the dead'."

Dr Carey added that the Resurrection was the bedrock on which Christianity rests.

"It is the Church's message of eternal hope to the world. What a wonderful gift it is from God to all people. Life for all who come to God. Come, all are welcome here."

Dr Carey mentioned a survey released today which showed that 50% of people believe in the Resurrection, 34% do not and 16% are undecided.

"Those who thought our society was overrun by secularism and scepticism will be in for a surprise. It shows the deep de-

posits of belief beneath the surface."

In the Vatican City, the Pope called for support for the "artisans" of peace in Bosnia, northern Ireland and the Holy Land.

Two weeks before Italian parliamentary elections, the Pope began reading a list of Easter wishes in 56 languages with an appeal to predominantly Catholic Italy to keep in mind its Christian roots. But he singled out no party in the race between a conservative alliance that includes former neo-fascists and a center-left coalition led by ex-Communists.

Going up after the Mass to the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica overlooking the square, John Paul prayed that the risen Christ may "enlighten and guide all those who are building peace, every day in every corner of the globe at the coast of great sacrifices."

The pope will likely take up the plight of Algerian civilians caught up in that country's bloody battle pitting the military-backed government and fundamentalist Muslim guerrillas when he visits neighboring Tunisia on a one-day visit April 14.

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Wall Street Money. Get rich quick or at least have fun trying. Teaches investment strategies and allows you to access financial databases.

Launch Pad. A colourful program for kids that keeps your files safely out of reach.

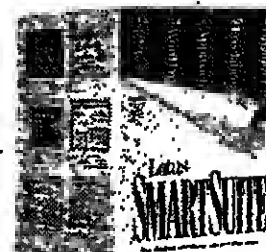
Software you can hum along to. A range of fun programs to learn music, edit music, or even play a selection of your own CDs.

Fun for kids. They'll find Hyperman, Magic Theatre, Jumpstart Kindergarten, Sports Illustrated for Kids, and Undersea Adventure. Very cool.

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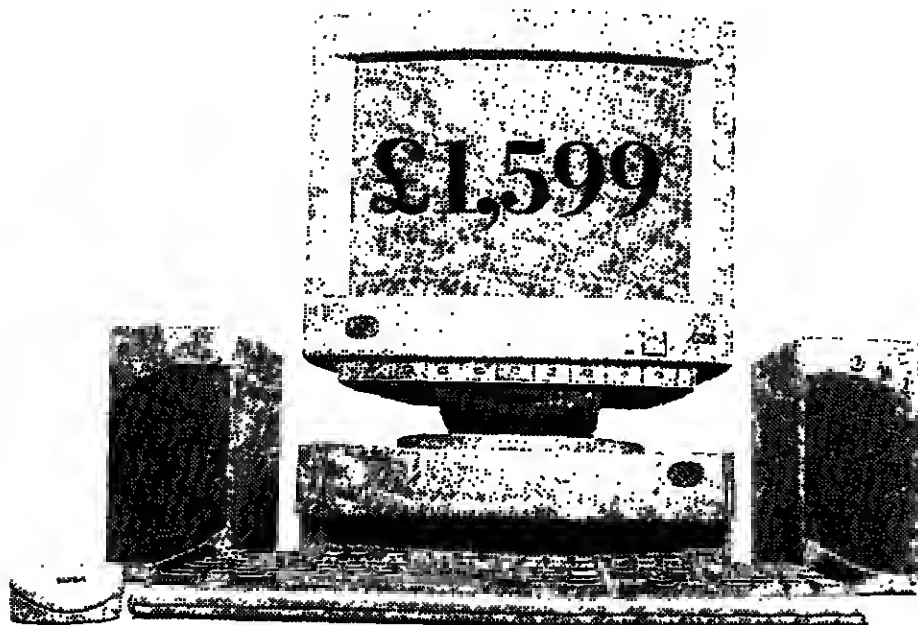
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July 1995

Scare over Pill linked to rise in abortions

Alarming new evidence has emerged of a huge increase in unwanted pregnancies following last October's scare over the safety of the contraceptive Pill.

In Bristol, the number of requests for an abortion in the last three months has more than doubled leading to longer waiting times for the operation.

In Norwich, statistics show a 20 per cent rise – and the number of abortion clinics has been increased from three to four a week to cope with demand.

Family planning experts in Glasgow also report a rise, details of which will be published in the next six weeks.

And as many as 40 cases of unwanted pregnancies have been reported by the Marie Stopes charity which runs six family planning clinics in Leeds, Manchester, Essex and London.

Family planners say the demand is unprecedented, and the rise will prompt fears of a reversal in the downward trend of teenage pregnancy rates – one of the Government's *Health of the Nation* targets.

About 1.5 million women taking the "third-generation" Pill were told last October that they faced an increased risk of blood clots in the legs. The Government's Committee on the

Safety of Medicines said research had shown women taking these kinds of Pill were twice as likely to suffer from deep vein thrombosis as those on other types of oral contraceptives.

The seven brands involved are Femodene, Femodene ED, Minulet, Triadene, Tri-minulet, Marvelon and Mercilon.

Doctors were advised not to prescribe these pills to women who were overweight, or had varicose veins or a history of thrombosis.

Women taking the pills were urged to keep taking them until the end of their cycle, then discuss with their doctor whether to switch to another contraceptive. But fear appears to have been driven many off the Pill altogether.

This is borne out by a survey of 1,300 third-generation users carried out three weeks after Government's announcement.

More than half had their confidence shaken and teenagers were particularly confused over the level of increased risk, according to Christopher Allison, for Exeter University's Institute of Population Studies.

A separate survey by Dr Sally Hope, a family doctor in Oxford, said 12 per cent of users at her practice stopped taking

the Pill on the day of the warning.

Dr Christine Horrocks, a family planning expert at Frenchay Hospital, Bristol, said at least 56 women were known to have had a termination in the last three months because fear had prompted them to stop taking the Pill. "This is probably an under-estimate. In February, we could barely cope with the numbers coming in. Instead of having 70 women waiting at one time, there were 170. The waiting list was much longer. Sometimes it was difficult getting women seen before 12 weeks."

Dr Kate Nash, principal medical officer for the Central Family Planning Clinic, in Norwich said figures in the three-month period from December to February showed the number of terminations was 258 compared with 214 carried out over the same period the previous year.

Evidence showed 18 had stopped taking the Pill following the publicity and become pregnant as a result, while 32 said they were about to start taking the Pill but turned to other less reliable methods.

Further evidence of the rise is likely to be revealed in a British Pregnancy Advisory Service survey to be published next week.

Cow carcasses could be burned in open pits

PAUL FIELD

Ministers have not ruled out burning carcasses of millions of cattle suspected of being infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in open pits on farmland.

The Ministry of Agriculture admitted the option of digging pits was still being discussed as it dismissed suggestions that culled cows were to be dumped at sea.

Under the plan the parts of the animal most likely to harbour the agent that causes BSE would be removed for incineration at high temperature. The remainder would be ground up for marine dumping.

A ministry spokesman denied a newspaper report which outlined the proposal but admitted using authorised pits was among a range of possibilities.

The Government faces a major headache establishing how to dispose of the dead cows, following revelations in the *Independent* last month that the nine incinerators licensed to destroy cattle could not cope with up to 15,000 culled cows a week.

Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, proposed the phased slaughter and incineration of at least 4 million cattle to the European Union last week in a bid to overturn the export ban on British beef.

The cost of the plan, involving the destruction of all dairy cattle over 30 months old once they had reached the end of their useful lives, is expected to

reach £3.7m over six years.

The Government is under pressure from Brussels to order the selective slaughter of herds positively identified with BSE, which farmers hope to avoid.

However the dumping of carcasses in either pits or the sea has been condemned by environmental groups and veterinary surgeons needed to oversee a culling policy have said they would refuse.

Alan Watson, senior campaigner on industry and pollution for the environmental pressure group Friends of the Earth, said: "The prion that causes BSE is very robust and might well survive in the marine food chain. There is every chance that it would find its way into products such as cod liver oil."

He added: "Current waste disposal capacity in the UK is inadequate to deal with a major cattle cull. Burning in open pits is not an option and there is considerable uncertainty about whether the BSE agents would be destroyed."

"Landfilling carcasses risks contaminating vital ground-water supplies."

The British Veterinary Association has pointed out that the State Veterinary Service could not cope with monitoring the burning of carcasses in authorised dumps. BVA president, Bob Stevenson, said many vets, crucial to the success of any mass slaughter, would be reluctant to cooperate.

Letters, page 14

Funeral prices rise to £1,500

Funeral costs have soared over the last three years, with burials rising the most by 38 per cent to an average £1,523, a report reveals today.

The cost of a funeral with cremation over the same period has gone up by 15 per cent to £1,024. Those price jumps compare with a 7 per cent increase in inflation during that time. Burials in south-east England cost 22 per cent more than the average and half as much again as the south-west, the cheapest region.

The 1996 survey, published by the Manchester Unity Friendly Society, shows big regional variations in the cost of burials, although little difference for cremations.

"The survey suggests that increasing competition between funeral providers means many directors now quote an attractive low 'basic' cost, but then add on the disbursements and extras to bring the expected total costs up to a much higher level."

"On average, these extra costs add 101 per cent to the cost of a basic funeral (in other words double the price) and 30 per cent to the cost of a basic cremation."

"Within a locality the cost of identical funerals often varies by hundreds of pounds, so it pays to shop around," it added.

"Funeral costs continue to rise and most funeral directors now require payment well before probate. Therefore, it is important to have sufficient funds readily available."

Widow appeals for help in catching murderer

The widow of an elderly motorist who died after being dragged from his car and brutally beaten as he stopped to ask for directions yesterday pleaded for his attacker to be caught.

As a hunt continued for the man who assaulted Stevan Popovich, aged 74, in Leeds, West Yorkshire, his widow, Dragica, said: "It is just unbelievable that he should stop to ask someone the way and be beaten to death."

"He was the sort of man who would do anything for anybody. I just hope and pray they catch whoever did this before it happens to someone else."

Yugoslav-born Mr Popovich, a retired bus driver, was attacked as he stopped to ask for directions to a hotel in the Chapeltown area, where he was to meet friends. They were to travel to a meeting of a Serbian group in Leicester. Police said he suffered a heart attack after being repeatedly kicked. Despite his injuries he hung on to his Lada car as the man, described as of Afro-Caribbean appearance, drove it away.



Popovich: Attacked when he stopped to ask the way

Mrs Popovich, 65, said at the couple's home in Shaw, near Oldham, Greater Manchester, that her husband had done a lot of charity work to help refugees in the former Yugoslavia, where they both had family members.

The couple met in a camp in Germany after they fled Yugoslavia at the end of the Second World War.

"We were so happy here and we had so many English friends," said Mrs Popovich.

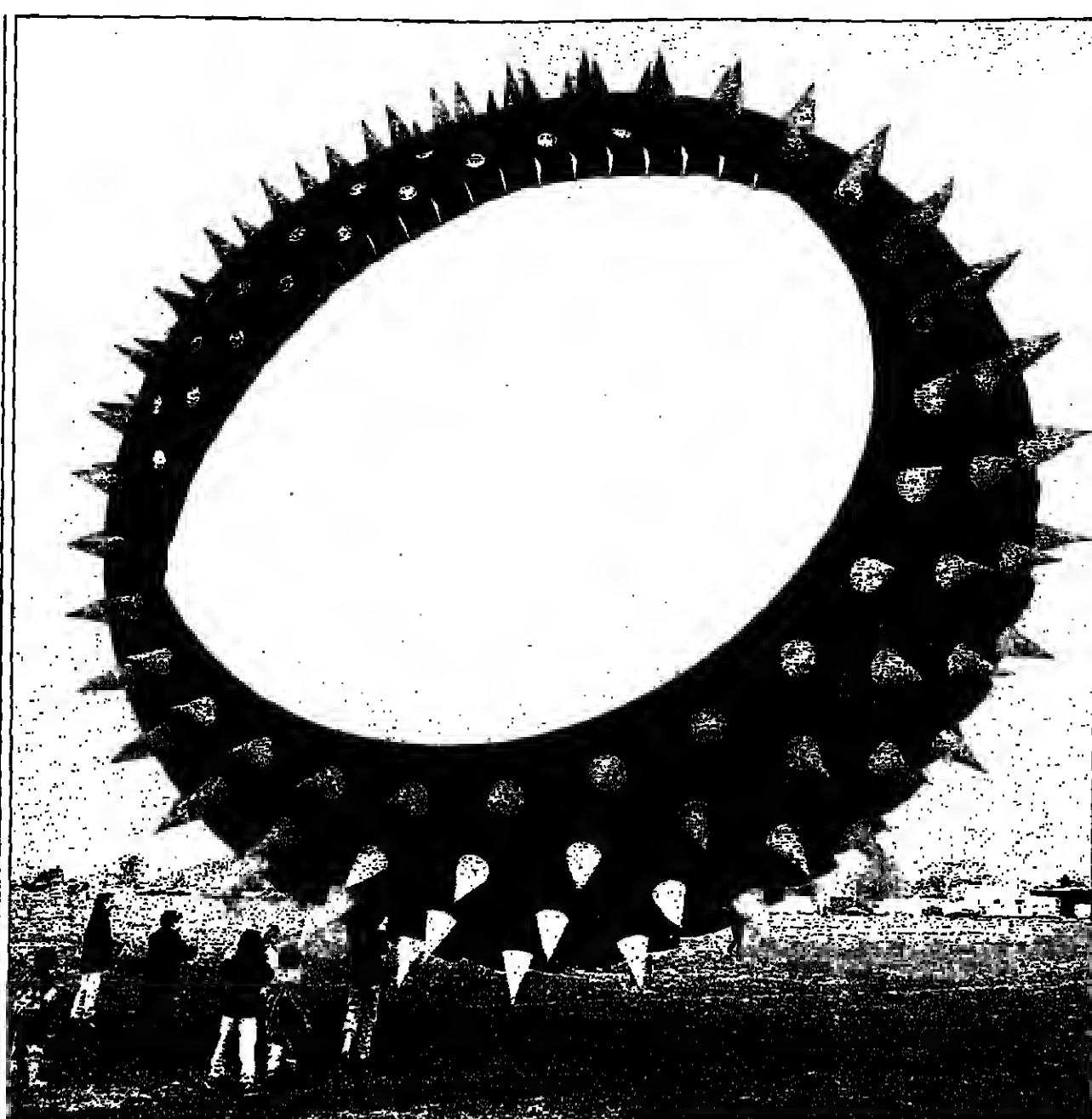
"Stevan loved the people here. He just trusted people. He has never hurt anybody in his life. He has never been nasty to anyone."

Detective Superintendent Andy Brown, who is leading the hunt for the killer, confirmed that the motive for the assault was robbery. Mr Popovich was killed for the £50 he had in his wallet, his wedding ring and wrist watch.

He was just one street away from the hotel he was heading for, the Adriatic, when he got lost at about 8.20am. He stopped and wound down his window to ask directions from a young man, but was dragged from his seat, kicked and punched and robbed.

Mr Popovich was pulled along the road for about 15 yards as he tried to stop the youth stealing his car. He suffered fractured ribs and died later in hospital without regaining consciousness.

Chapeltown, which has an 80 per cent Afro-Caribbean population, is infamous in Leeds for violence and drug dealing.



Sky games: Children and adults admiring a huge kite yesterday on the opening of the Blackheath Easter Kite Festival in south-east London. The annual event has two days of competitions and demonstrations. Photograph: Edward Sykes

Divers to survey damaged liner

LOUISE JURY

Divers working for the Cunard cruise line will today take their first close-up look at the damage which was caused to the *Royal Viking Sun* when it hit a reef. Inspection of the luxury liner will give the disaster-prone company an indication of how quickly the vessel can be returned to service.

The 37,845-ton ship was towed to the Egyptian port of Sharm el Sheikh on Thursday after the below-the-water-line collision in the Red Sea. Although the *Royal Viking Sun* is widely understood to have hit a coral reef, Cunard maintain that is yet to be confirmed.

A spokesman, Eric Flounders, said: "She is anchored in Sharm el Sheikh. A proper investigation into the damage that has been caused will be carried out next week and we will make a statement then. There is no indication of how the ship got into trouble and any comment would be speculative." He said the company knew nothing of suggestions that it might have to compensate Jordan for any damage to the reef. The collision happened four miles outside a nature reserve.

The last of more than 500 passengers on board when the liner was boled should arrive home today after Cunard organised flights from Egypt over the weekend.



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news

MPs demand 'open' child abuse inquiry

LOUISE JURY

William Hague, the Secretary of State for Wales, will come under mounting pressure this week to launch a public inquiry into what is thought to be Britain's highest child abuse scandal.

Welsh MPs repeated demands for openness this weekend following the *Independent's* revelation that Cwyl county council voted to suppress a report into decades of abuse in its children's homes.

The secrecy surrounding the findings is such that even the inquiry team, which is led by John Jilling, former head of Derbyshire's social services, have been told to hand in their own copies.

They are understood to have been highly critical of all the agencies involved in the failure

of care, from social services to North Wales police and the Welsh Office. They argue in the report that only a judicial inquiry into the extensive and widespread abuse can address wide areas of concern. There are unresolved suggestions that public figures may have been involved in the abuse.

Mr Hague will find a copy of the findings waiting on his desk when he returns from a foreign trade mission this week.

Labour MP Rhodri Morgan said the social services inspectorate at the Welsh Office had had copies of the draft report since February, so there was little reason for any delay in action.

A full public inquiry was needed because of the "phenomenal number of different people at different homes who have been involved," he said.

More than 50 staff have been disciplined since 1974 and 13 convictions obtained. Stephen Norris, head of the Cartrefle children's home, near Wrexham, was jailed for 10 years for sexual assaults on boys in his care. His conviction led to the discovery of the widespread abuse.

Mr Morgan, the Labour Party's health spokesman in Wales, said: "We do need to know whether there is a common pattern, whether they were connected to each other and how so many paedophiles managed to target children's homes in north Wales. It defies logic to think these people all landed there by accident."

The real lesson of the scandal could not be learned until the whole picture had been established, Mr Morgan said. There had never been a public investigation of claims that

social workers effectively procured boys for people outside the homes, in addition to using them for their own pleasure.

None of 14 reports, including 12 carried out internally into the affair, has been published. The most recent was blocked last Tuesday for fear it could help seriously damaged victims in legal claims against the council. Municipal Mutual, Cwyl council's insurers, threatened the council if it did so, and most copies are now being pulped.

It is thought that at least 100 children and possibly double that number may have suffered sexual abuse in homes in north Wales in the 1970s and 1980s.

At least 12 former residents are dead and there are suggestions that there may be as many as 16 whose deaths were related to their experiences in the children's homes.

'Sleeping' dental patients at higher risk

People considering having their wisdom teeth removed should be aware of the dangers involved, dental researchers have warned.

A study carried out by the University of Wales Dental School, Cardiff, has shown that extraction under general anaesthetic — favoured by three out of four patients — carries a four-times greater risk of nerve

damage than removal under local anaesthetic.

The removal of wisdom teeth is one of the most common surgical procedures in Britain's hospitals. But it can cause damage to nerves around the lower jaw, leaving about 10 per cent of patients with a numb lower lip or tongue which can persist for up to six months. In 1 in 200 cases, it lasts for life.

The study followed 367 patients undergoing wisdom-teeth extractions. It found that about 13 per cent had some nerve damage afterwards, and those choosing sleep were four times more likely to have nerve damage than those who remained awake, although the surgical difficulties were similar.

One of the researchers, Professor Jon Shepherd, said: "We

do not yet know the reason behind this surprising finding and we are investigating further ... but the research shows it is in the patients' best interests to have [extractions] done while awake."

Professor Shepherd and his colleagues Chris Brann and Dr Mark Brickley presented their findings to British Society for Dental Research's annual conference in Bristol last week.



Panic over: Horses grazing outside the smoking stables yesterday. Photograph: INS News

Stable fire causes chaos in Windsor

Chaos hit the town of Windsor at the weekend when a fire at stables near Windsor castle led to dozens of horses being released and running panicking through the streets.

The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Prince of Wales came out of the Castle to see what was happening as fire engines rushed to the Guards Polo Club on Saturday night.

The Duke and Duchess rushed from their former marital home in Sunninghill Park a mile from Windsor after hearing the squeal of tyres and a car crash. They found a woman whose car had smashed into a pony fleeing the fire. The horse, killed instantly in the impact, was lying in the road. The woman, who has not been named, suffered facial injuries.

Police Sergeant Andrew Morrow said: "It was like the Grand National. There were more than 30 horses charging up the road in complete darkness, running towards oncoming vehicles."

Shortly before 10pm flames had been spotted leaping from a barn attached to four staff chalets at the club. A groom raced to the stables and opened the doors to release the 120 panicking ponies in case they were engulfed in flames and smoke. About 30 galloped through the main streets of the Berkshire town while others ran off alone. Several collided with cars and one other person was injured.

Abortive privatisation cost taxpayers £2.4m

CHRIS BLACKHURST
Westminster Correspondent

Outside advisers have emerged as the only winners from an abortive major Government privatisation exercise. Their advice — which took three years — that the Department of Trade and Industry should not contract-out its Insolvency Service, cost the taxpayer £700,000.

The DTI minister, Philip Oppenheim, disclosed that the whole exercise cost £2.4m. In three years, the Government received 149 bids from firms keen to run the service and put them through six different stages of competition. After all that, and an expensive advertising campaign to boost the Government suddenly changed its mind and wrote-off the cash.

The expenditure will raise further questions about the Government's reliance on man-

agement consultants and its constant searching for privatisation candidates. Labour is claiming the money was needlessly wasted to satisfy political dogma.

In July 1993, the Government announced that the Insolvency Service, which deals with bankruptcies and debt recoveries, would be handed to the private sector to run. A "pre-feasibility" and "feasibility" study were undertaken and advertisements for potential bidders placed in national newspapers.

Almost 150 expressions of interest were received, and a detailed prospectus prepared. Subsequently, 91 firm proposals were sent in, from 34 companies. Negotiations were launched between the companies, the Insolvency Service and the DTI.

A shortlist of three candidates was drawn-up. Then,

suddenly, ministers had a change of heart: the Insolvency Service would remain in the public sector.

The whole exercise, admitted Mr Oppenheim, in a Parliamentary answer to Barbara Roche, the shadow Minister for Small Business, cost £2,415,345 — including more than £700,000 for outside consultants and lawyers.

Mrs Roche condemned this as a waste of public money. "I find it astonishing that ministers have squandered £2.4m of taxpayers' money. The Government's privatisation dogma has meant a bonanza for outside consultants and lawyers, job insecurity over three years for people working in the Insolvency Service, continued concerns amongst small firms about the effect of the contracting out, and a complete waste of public money."

BBC staff in two-day courses on phone use

The BBC is sending its managers to hotels for two-day training breaks to teach them how to use a new telephone system, it emerged yesterday. But the corporation insists that the project will actually save licence payers' money.

Over the past two years the BBC has been paying Swedish telecommunications firm Ericsson thousands of pounds a week for training sessions on how to use the new phones.

Managers throughout the corporation have been allocated two-day training trips to help them get to grips with the system. So far 50 managers have been sent for training. The most recent group stayed at the Queens Hotel in Brighton, Sussex.

Other staff receive in-house telephone training at the BBC which is also provided by Ericsson.

A BBC spokesman said the training contract agreed with the telecommunications firm was a long-term investment. "BBC accountants calculated the cost of employing Ericsson to run the telephone network and compared this figure with the cost of training their own managers to operate the system. They estimated that training, though expensive, would mean savings in the future," he said.

He insisted that the 50 managers who had received training already were "not simply being taught how to dial and answer the telephone."

"They are learning how to work the computers which operate the telephone system. They should then be able to train their own staff, and thus save licence payers further money."

Douglas family to seek judicial review

The family of Brian Douglas, who died in police custody last year, said yesterday they would seek a judicial review of the decision not to prosecute anyone over his death.

They wanted to see justice done and believed the Crown Prosecution Service reached its decision wrongly.

Brian Douglas, a 33-year-old music promoter, was arrested last May. His family claimed he suffered a fractured skull caused by the use of American-style batons.

After the CPS announced last week it would not be taking action, Mr Douglas's brother Donald said the family would be starting an appeal to raise money to bring a private prosecution.

But yesterday Donald Douglas said the family would initially pursue the matter through a judicial review. "We hope to bring this matter to the High Court within the next 10 days. If that fails then we will set the private prosecution in motion," said Mr Douglas at the family home at Balham, south London.

DAILY POEM

Electric Full Stops

By Nisha Doshi

Nose pressed flat
Against the window;
All the way
From London to York;
I sat, rocked
By the rhythm of the track,
And teased
By the tilted, toothless grin
Of the cheery Moon, on its back.
A train flashed past,
Like a blurred arrow of light,
Weaving through the cold January night;
Weaving through the miles of blackness.
Punctuated only
By amber dots,
Hovering,
Like a million electric full stops.

Nisha Doshi, from Acomb in York, is ten years old, and wrote this poem when she was eight. It appears, along with 80 other prizewinners' entries in the book of the 1995 WH Smith Young Writers' Competition — to which Nisha's poem gave the title, *Electric Full Stops* — published by Macmillan Children's Books this month at £4.99. The oldest competition of its kind in the United Kingdom, this storytelling, verse and drawing extravaganza began in 1959 as the Children's Literary Competition. Since then, more than 1 million children have taken part. Past winners include Marina Warner, Hermoine Lee, Neil Bartlett, Brian Keenan, Vanessa Feltz, Glyn Maxwell and Helena Bonham-Carter.

Winning entries from *Electric Full Stops* will be featured in the *Independent's* poetry slot each day this week. Details for entry into the 1997 WH Smith Young Writers' Competition will appear on Friday.

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N Korea mounts new troop incursion

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY
Tokyo

For the third time in three days, armed North Korean troops yesterday entered the demilitarised zone (DMZ) which divides the North and South. The incident violated the increasingly hollow Armistice Agreement, and increased friction at the beginning of what will be an unusually tense week.

Just after 8pm on Sunday evening, about 300 soldiers of the North's Korean People's Army (KPA) drove into the 800-yard wide Joint Security Area (JSA), the only crossing point on the heavily fortified border, which remains the last Cold War flashpoint in the world. Similar incursions occurred on Friday and Saturday when as many as 260 soldiers, armed with rifles and machine guns, arrived in army trucks to take up battle positions and install mortars on the North Korean side.

Under the 1953 Armistice Agreement between Pyongyang and the United Nations, which brought to an end the Korean War, a maximum of 35 military police from either side are allowed into the JSA, armed with nothing larger than hand guns. Last Thursday, in a move that had been anticipated for several weeks, Pyongyang renounced its "duty" in the area, and said that its forces would no longer bear the required special insignia.

The announcement was accompanied by bellicose rhetoric from both North and South; in the latter, fiercely fought elections to the National Assembly will be held next week. American forces in South Korea went on the highest military watch alert in 15 years. But, far from being a prelude to invasion and war, Pyongyang's strategy appears, by many reckonings, to be aimed at a peace treaty.

Since the end of the Cold War, North Korea's industrial and agricultural output, infrastructure and economic growth have rusted almost to a standstill. Structurally, many of the components of a prospering economy are in place: crucially, what Pyongyang lacks is foreign investment. For five years, it has pinned its hopes for national survival on the greatest

geo-political prize of all: a peace treaty with the US.

In seeking this, it has few tools at its disposal. On paper at least, the KPA is an alarming adversary: its million troops, supported by chemical, and perhaps nuclear, warheads outnumber the 650,000-strong South Korean army and its 37,000 American allies. But technologically, the KPA is a period piece. Much of its equipment is pre-war, fuel is scarce, and it has ranged against it the same potential force unleashed in the Gulf War. If Pyongyang chose to mobilise fully, it could certainly inflict horrible casualties on the South and its allies; it could also initiate lesser hostilities, from acts of terrorism to a limited invasion, in an attempt to force concessions. But it would be a potentially suicidal strategy. An all-out war would in the long-term be the one strategy guaranteed to bring down the North Korean government.

Its only other bargaining chip is the Armistice and, for five years, Pyongyang has been slowly whittling it away. In 1991 it suspended meetings of the supervisory Military Armistice Commission. Two years later, it expelled from its side of the DMZ neutral observers from Czechoslovakia, soon followed by the Polish delegation. Last month, North Korea diplomats began to speak of "final and decisive" steps towards annulling the Armistice, unless Washington agreed to talks. Last week's announcement, and the sabre-rattling over the weekend are the fulfilment of this promise.

Its chances of success do not appear high. South Korea is terrified of being excluded from a treaty. The Americans, publicly at least, insist that they are not interested, and that the Korean Cold War must be brought to an end by the Koreans themselves. The closest things to concessions, ironically, are coming from Pyongyang: recently it began hinting that, even after a treaty, it could tolerate a certain number of US troops on the peninsula. If the rebuffs continue, the North will be left with fewer and fewer options and most of those that remain do not bear thinking about.

Patriarch calls on Israel to 'let my people go'

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

Addressing a congregation depleted by the Israeli ban on Palestinians entering Jerusalem, the head of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land yesterday asked Israel to lift the closure on the West Bank and Gaza. Speaking in Jerusalem in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch, said: "We say to them today what Moses said to the Pharaoh on Passover day: Let my people go."

Christians in Jerusalem say their traditional Easter celebrations have drawn fewer worshippers because Christians from towns like Bethlehem and Ramallah have been unable to get past Israeli checkpoints. Last Sunday the traditional Palm Sunday march by Palestinian boy and girl scouts was broken up by Israeli police before it could enter the Old City.

Carrying a silver staff and preceded by Muslim guards who beat the ground with canes, Patriarch Sabbah entered the church through the doorway of the Holy Sepulchre built by the Crusaders. Commenting on the exclusion of almost all of the 65,000 Christians from the West Bank and Gaza, he said: "Jerusalem is closed to our brothers."

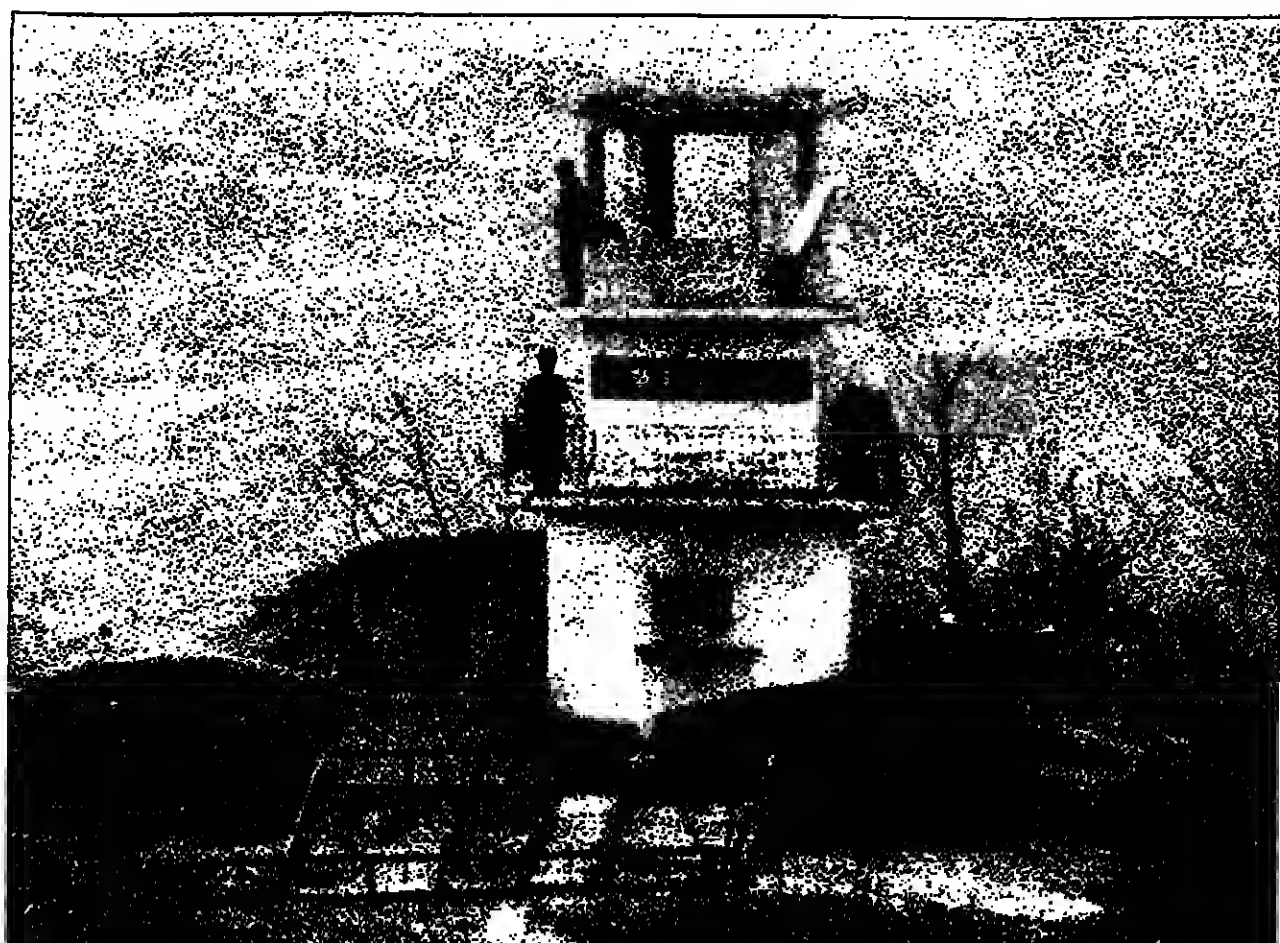
Some Christian Palestinians celebrated Easter in a ceremony in Bethlehem, which was handed over by Israel to Palestinian rule in December. Irene, a Christian Palestinian, said: "Israeli soldiers refused to allow us entry to Jerusalem on Saturday when we usually bring the holy candles and light from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and they did the same today."

The number of Christian Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories has fallen sharply since Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. They now make up only 40 per cent of the population of Bethlehem and there is heavy Christian emigration from Ramallah, mostly to the US. The Old City of Jerusalem has its Christian Quarter, but many of its shops are owned by Muslims from Hebron.

Repeated Israeli closures of the West Bank since 1991 have crippled the economy of Palestinian East Jerusalem because much of its business came from nearby Palestinian villages. Overall business is down by 40 per cent according to one estimate. But the closure which began after four suicide bombs in Israel has been tighter than anything seen since the Gulf war. The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem says it caused the death of eight Palestinians denied medical treatment.

"In our message, we condemn the violence which kills the innocent," said Patriarch Sabbah. "We also condemn violence exercised by the government itself, such as the closures of Palestinian territories which cause hunger, the disarray, and disturbance in the weekly life, work, schooling and access to hospitals."

■ Nablus, West Bank — Yasser Arafat's security forces arrested a prominent preacher a day after he led a prayer sermon attended by the PLO leader, AP reports. Sheikh Jamal Kayed, 60, was detained on Saturday night in the West Bank town of Nablus, security officials said. Islamic leaders speculated that officials might have objected to the sheikh's quotation of passages from the Koran that could have been interpreted as being critical of Mr Arafat's rule.



Test of nerve: North Korean troops on look-out across the DMZ near Panmunjom

Photograph: AFP

Tale of the pig too lucrative for release in China

Peking (Reuters) — The Australian film *Babe*, a barnyard tale of a pig that wants to be a sheepdog, has been given the chop by Chinese censors. US film industry sources said yesterday.

The international box-office hit was among 10 foreign films proposed to be shown in China this year under an unwritten quota system allowing new releases to reach Chinese audiences, a source said.

"I don't know why Chinese censors have decided not to allow in *Babe*," the source said. "It is a charming film."

Chinese sources said domestic authorities might be nervous that the film, in which a talking porker hams it up, might stop local movies from bringing home the bacon. *Babe* won an Oscar for best visual effects at last month's Academy Awards and had been nominated for best picture.

Peking last year launched a policy that allows distribution of

10 recently released foreign films each year under a box-office sharing agreement.

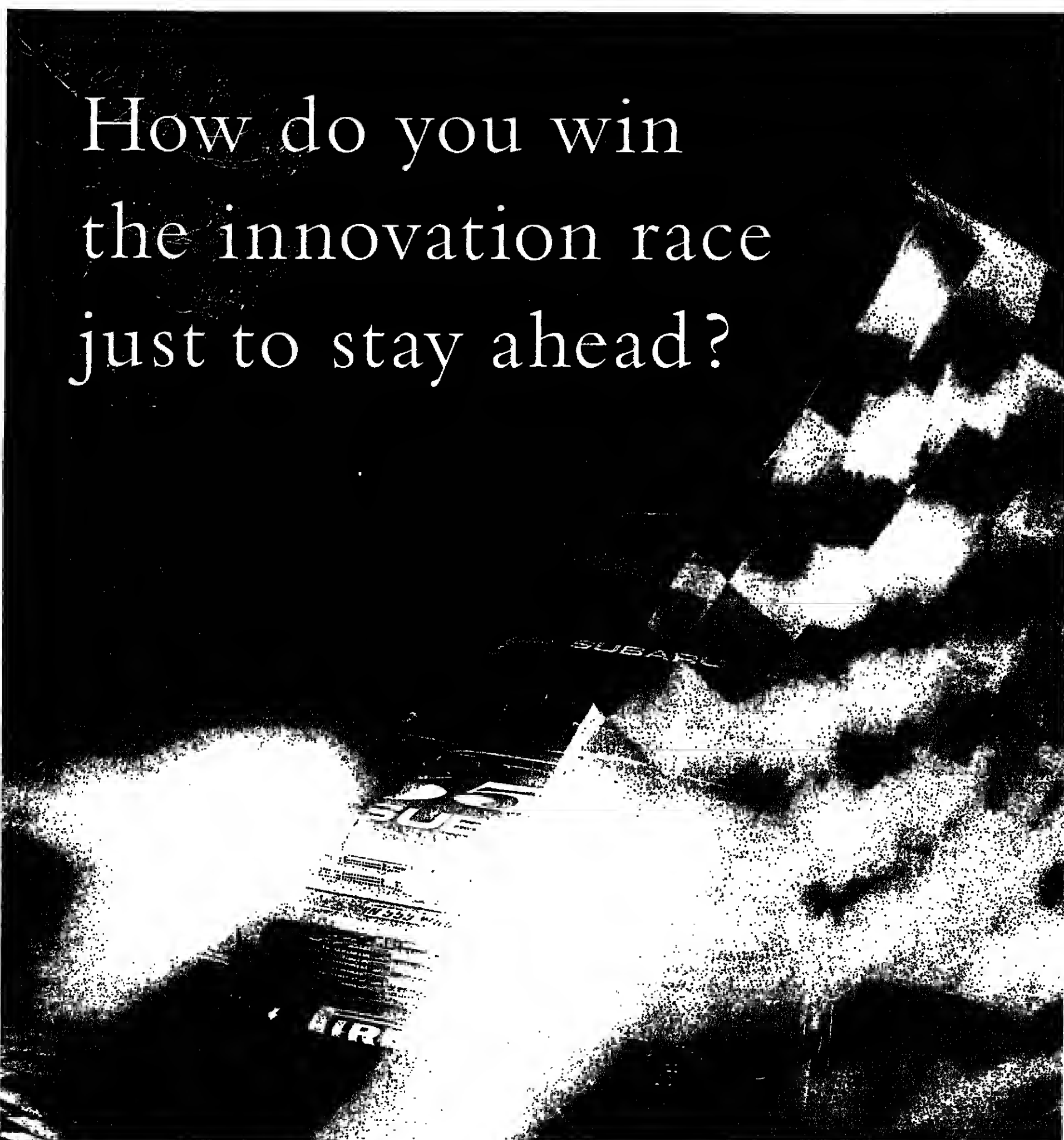
This has been lucrative for the Chinese partner, China Film, and for Hollywood but at the expense of domestic competitors and has aroused concern among local film officials.

China's censors scratched the latest James Bond blockbuster, *Goldeneye*, and *Apollo 13*, which glorifies the US space industry at a time when China's is in some disarray.

This year Chinese audiences have been allowed to see Clint Eastwood's *The Bridges of Madison County*, Dustin Hoffman in *Outbreak*, and Keanu Reeves in *A Walk in the Clouds* and will also see *Toy Story* and *Waterworld*.

China last year imported such films as *True Lies*, *The Lion King* and *The Fugitive*, which set box-office records, while many of 150 domestically made films gathered dust.

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Bosnia: As questions are asked about how Muslims were armed, the victims of a nine-month-old slaughter lie still unburied

The horror of the lost souls of Srebrenica

GORDANA KUKIC
Reuters

LOUISI

William State under week into a Britain's scandal. Well, demar weeks: pender county a repo in its c The finding inquir John Deiby have t own o The been agenc

Mratinci — The bodies, stripped of their flesh by marauding animals but still wearing tattered rags, are scattered on the forested hilltop where they fell. From the clothing, it can be seen that some are civilians, others are soldiers, possibly 500 of them lying sprawled amid blackened vegetation.

All were victims of the terrified Muslim flight from the nearby UN "safe haven" of Srebrenica last July, as men, women and children plunged into the surrounding hills to

escape the approach of the Bosnian Serb Army.

They have lain here since with no one to bury them or, apparently, to ask how they died, although some among the nearby Serb villagers are willing to talk or guide visitors to the spot an hour's climb away.

Milos, 72, said: "They passed by our positions. The first Muslim who surrendered told us that 14,500 had set out from Srebrenica and there were just 500 of us [Serbs] on our line. I told him he must have meant 1,450... People say just 3,000 of the 14,500 got through."

The fall of Srebrenica, almost

at the end of the three-and-a-half-year Bosnian war, still haunts the conscience of all sides in the conflict, and of the United Nations which stood by and allowed it to happen. The Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic and his commander, General Ratko Mladic, face war crimes charges as a result of it. Their army is accused of having killed 3,000 unarmed Muslim prisoners it took and of bulldozing their bodies into mass graves which investigators want to excavate. Another 5,000 men from Srebrenica are missing, believed dead.

The people whose exodus

ended on the hilltop at Mratinci had left Srebrenica, nine miles to the south-east, on the eve of the final Serb assault. They headed at night into rugged, hostile, Serb-held mountain country, toward the Bosnian government refuge of Tuzla, 40 miles to the north-west.

Milos said the refugees sent dogs running ahead to test the ground for mines. Zoran, 45, said they took shelter on the hilltop and added: "Some gave up and some fought on and tried to break through our lines."

According to the accounts, the Bosnian Serbs were pouring mortar fire on the Muslims.

The bulk of the fighting took place around 11pm on 13 July. When it was over, an unknown number of Muslims were dead — certainly scores, possibly hundreds — and three Serbs.

"We went up there later and took weapons and clothes from the dead," Zoran said. "There were heavy machine-guns and mortars." Another local said: "Those who went later to the hills say there was a lot of new clothing, like at a fair. Our people went up there to collect the stuff. Two tractor-loads of weapons were collected."

Milos went up the hill three weeks after the killing. "You

wouldn't believe it if you didn't see it for yourself," he said. "Dead people piled on top of each other."

Local people said American Nato peace-keepers deployed in eastern Bosnia this year have visited the site, but took no action to deal with the bodies. Reuter journalists who went to the site on Saturday found it carpeted with human remains, scraps of clothing, personal belongings such as toothbrushes and spent ammunition.

Because many skeletons had been broken up, it was not possible to count the number, but local people estimate that

500 died. At least 50 skulls

glistened in the sunshine. Beside a stream was the skeleton of a fully dressed man who looked as if he had been drinking the water when he died. Under a tree were eight other skeletons, one of them curled in a sleeping position. Littered among them were personal papers, including bank cards and passports bearing Muslim names.

A letter addressed to "Dear Nina and the rest of my family," said: "Just a brief message to you to say that we are alright but that it is more and more difficult to be without you. But all

this must end sometime and we shall live together as before. Allah Imanet. All my love, Rasid."

Tuzla — Six Muslim men from Srebrenica have walked to safety after nine months hiding in woods in Bosnian Serb territory, Reuter reports. The six arrived in Muslim-held Tuzla on Friday. The men spoke of walking along paths littered with corpses and eating food they found on their way. It took them 270 days to reach Muslim territory because they found their route to safety blocked every time by Serb soldiers.

Letters, page 14
Jonathan Eyal, page 15

Clinton hit by row over Iranian arms

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington and MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

Senior Clinton administration foreign policy makers are likely to be hauled over the coals on Capitol Hill this summer, after charges they may have misled Congress and broken the law in consenting to the shipment of Iranian arms to Bosnia during the war, in violation of the then UN embargo.

The row surfaced last week when the *Los Angeles Times* published a detailed account, not seriously challenged by White House or the State Department, of the operation, lasting from early 1994 until the beginning of this year, channelled through Croatia with a blessing from the White House that was kept secret from US diplomats and even the CIA.

Seizing an election-year stick with which to beat Mr Clinton, some Republicans claim the affair was a Democratic equivalent of Iran-Contra, the White House-run covert operation whose revelation in late 1986 almost wrecked Ronald Reagan's presidency.

That appears an exaggeration: the White House has insisted its tacit approval of the arms for Bosnia was in keeping with the "letter of the law" on the UN embargo, and as far as is known, no US money, aircraft or arms were involved in the airlift of weapons, in stark contrast to Iran-Contra.

The embarrassment for the Clinton administration is still considerable. It was condoning a breach of the embargo at the very moment it was frantically defending it before a Congress bent on lifting the ban.

Compounding that hypocrisy is the fact that Iran is a sworn foe of the US, at the top of

Washington's black list of states which sponsor terrorism. Having connived at Iran's role in delivering the arms, Washington is now complaining about a continuing Iranian presence in Bosnia, warning it could imperil reconstruction efforts.

None of these inconsistencies may add up to crimes against Congress and the Constitution. But there is more than enough material to provide a field day for the investigative committee, which Bob Dole, the majority leader and likely Republican opponent of Mr Clinton in November says will be a "top



Clinton: Broke embargo and kept it from the CIA

priority" when the Senate reconvenes on 15 April.

Assuming such a committee is set up, the summer of 1996 could provide a re-run of 1987 when senior Clinton policymakers will be grilled live on national television, like their counterparts in the Reagan administration nine years ago.

Reports of a similar deal in France were denied yesterday by the government. The foreign and defence ministers denied an arms deal had been done to secure the freedom of two French pilots, captured by the Bosnian Serbs last August.

They were responding to a report on French television that France bought weapons for the Bosnian Serbs in an agreement brokered and carried out by Russia.

The two pilots were released after 104 days in captivity, shortly before the Bosnian peace accord was signed in Paris, in December. All parties to their release then denied that a deal had been done. There were, however, persistent reports of a package involving arms supplies or a promise of immunity from prosecution for Bosnian Serb leaders who were suspected of war crimes.

The television report said money was transferred secretly from France to Russia to pay for the weapons, which were then supplied by the Russians. It offered no specific new evidence, beyond identifying the Russian intermediary, Vladimir Kulich, as a former KGB agent. It also showed a clip of President Jacques Chirac paying special tribute to Russia's contribution during his speech at the Bosnia peace signing.

On the French side, the agreement under which the pilots were freed involved a long-time Elysée negotiator, Jean-Charles Marchisani, who was the go-between after an Air France airliner was hijacked by Algerian terrorists in 1994.

Sarajevo — Bosnian Serb officials handed over files on 16 suspected war criminals but failed to meet all requirements on the release of prisoners of war, the top civilian administrator in Bosnia said yesterday. The statement from the office of the UN High Representative, Carl Bildt, did not say whether the Bosnian Serbs would be banned from a crucial donors meeting in Brussels starting on Friday, which could cut them off from reconstruction funds.



Guards of honour at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, carry coffins of victims of the disaster last week in which a US military plane, carrying senior businessmen and Ron Brown, the Commerce Secretary, on a Balkan trade trip, crashed near Dubrovnik, killing all 35 people on board

Islamic gangsters 'served in Bosnia'

PIERRE-YVES GLASS
Associated Press

Paris — In another sign that a gang wiped out by police may have had radical Islamic links, a French newspaper said yesterday the French Muslim convert who led it served in a Bosnian fundamentalist unit.

Police commandos stormed the gang's hideout in a Muslim ghetto of Roubaix in northern France on 29 March, killing four members. Two others fled and clashed with Belgian police. One was killed and the other wounded and captured. The survivor is a Frenchman of Moroccan origin. A seventh suspect, an Algerian aged 54, was arrested in Roubaix.

Three of the dead were of Arab origin and the two others were French converts to Islam. Police said Christophe Caze, 27, the one killed in Belgium, was the gang leader.

Citing investigators, the Paris weekly *Journal du Dimanche* said Caze enrolled as a medic in a force of foreign Muslim fundamentalists fighting for Bosnia's Muslim-led government. A medical student, he served in 1994 and 1995 near Zenica, in central Bosnia. Citing Caze's relatives, it said he married a young Bosnian woman and had a child. The other convert, Lionel Dumont, 25, served in Bosnia as a truck driver for aid convoys.

The two men and the others worshipped at the Dawa Mosque, near the gang's hideout. The mosque was visited by leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front, whose armed wing is battling the Algerian government. Tracts from a radical rebel force in Algeria, automatic weapons and explosives were found in the hideout.

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Hopes rise for end to Montana stand-off

TIM CORNWELL
Great Falls, Montana

Hopes rose yesterday that Easter could be the cue for a motley group of armed rightists and disgruntled farmers to walk peacefully out of their barricaded ranch in remote eastern Montana.

Leaders of the Montana Freemen say their beliefs come straight from "God's mouth", fuelling speculation that they would use the day of Christ's resurrection to surrender. They rely heavily on readings from the Bible to justify their mixture of anti-government protest, white supremacism and financial fakery.

Rumours of a settlement seemed partly inspired by television crews, dispirited by two weeks of sloshing through the melting snow and mud around the tiny town of Jordan. The Freemen appear to hate the media almost as much as the government and have confiscated equipment at gunpoint.

US Attorney Sherry Mat-teucci said she was "very optimistic that we will be able to resolve this without any serious confrontation". Negotiators were claiming progress in a spate of diplomacy to end the stand-off, with meetings led by local legislators.

Officials, determined from the start to avert a bloody shoot-out with the Freemen, confirmed that the wife and five-year-old daughter of a Freeman leader who left the compound at the weekend would not face criminal charges. And yesterday relatives allowed to visit the ranch were reportedly seen delivering Easter presents.

The siege is the latest in a number of recent confrontations between the government and cultists, survivalists, and far-right groups that came together under the "militia" banner.

But the Freemen have characteristics of their own. The 20 people thought to be inside the Jordan ranch several include well-known local ranchers, and their families, who have failed to pay farm loans.

The Freemen, a loosely structured group said to be active across the American West, reject the authority of the Federal Reserve bank and write fake cheques for large sums. They appear to have drawn hundreds of needy people into financial "training courses" with promises of easy payment of debt and taxes.

Many Montanans blame a small cadre that moved in from Colorado for stirring trouble in their own backyard and giving the state a bad name. Some say the FBI should get tough with the outsiders.

But most people in Jordan can name close relations on the ranch. "They are not all the kooks they are said to be," said Carole Heller, a local police dispatcher with a sister inside, after a visit. "She has not done anything that can't be repaired, can't be rectified."

The operation began when FBI agents trapped two Freemen leaders and arrested them on charges of multi-million dollar fraud and issuing death-threats against a judge. Several of those in the ranch face similar charges but prosecutors have pledged that any others will be allowed to leave and "get on with their lives".

The FBI is determined to avert a repeat of the killings at Waco, Texas and an earlier siege of white supremacists at Ruby Ridge, Idaho.

On both occasions the bureau was widely condemned for taking an over-aggressive, paramilitary approach that ended tragically.

The Jordan operation is being led by assistant FBI director Robert "Bea" Bryant, who headed the FBI's Salt Lake City, Utah office during a 1988 siege of armed religious polygamists accused of bombing a Mormon church.

During 13 days, gunfire from a log cabin was directed repeatedly at FBI positions but shots were not returned. Although a shoot-out ensued when agents tried to arrest the cult's leader, none of nine children inside was hurt.

Gunman 'took revenge' on family

Vernon, British Columbia (Reuters) — Residents of this scenic wine country town were in shock after a man shot and killed nine people and then killed himself.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said the gunman, 30-year-old Mark Vijay Chahal, entered a home on Friday and opened fire as relatives prepared for the wedding that day of his wife's sister.

"The motive that we're pursuing... is that he chose to take revenge on the entire family," RCMP Sergeant Doug Harl said on Saturday.

Chahal's estranged wife, 25-year-old Rajwar Kaur Gakhai, and the bride-to-be, 24-year-old Balwinder Kaur Gakhai, were among the victims in this quiet city about 180 miles north-east of Vancouver.

Witnesses described how Chahal opened fire with a .40-calibre semi-automatic handgun and a .30-calibre revolver. "He had two guns. One in each hand, just like the old western-style shooters, blasting away," neighbour Rick Young said.

"He was only a few yards away. He turned and looked me in the eye. I thought I was going to die. He had a full opportunity to plug me full of holes. But he just turned away from me and went around again to the back of the house and then fired some shots at the back."

Police found six people dead when they arrived at the house. The head of the family, 50-year-old Karnail Singh Gakhai who moved to Canada more than 20 years ago from Punjab, India, lay dead in the drive.

Three other victims died later in hospital. An elderly woman and a six-year-old girl remain in hospital with gunshot wounds. Two children were unharmed. Chahal committed suicide soon after the shootings at a nearby motel. He left a note apologising for the massacre.

US border killings anger Mexico

Temecula (AP) — The Mexican government is calling for an investigation into a crash that killed seven suspected illegal immigrants and injured 18 others while their truck was being followed by Border Patrol agents.

The Mexican Foreign Ministry expressed its "deepest concern for this tragic accident" on Saturday and said it had asked Mexican consular officials in the US to demand an investigation.

The ministry said it was calling on American authorities to review its methods of enforcing immigration laws, which it said "have caused, over a few days, two very grave incidents involving Mexican citizens."

The crash came less than a week after a truck filled with illegal immigrants was chased over 80 miles. The chase ended with the videotaped beating of two illegal immigrants by Riverside County sheriff's officers. Thousands of demonstrators jammed the streets of Los Angeles on Saturday to protest against the beatings.

The crash came after agents had followed the truck for about 12 miles. The truck driver lost control on a curvy road and overturned in a gully.

All seven of the men who were killed were crammed into the smashed cab, said Johnny Williams, the chief of the US Border Patrol in San Diego. "It was a grisly, grisly scene," he said.

The identities of the dead and injured were not immediately known. But Mr Williams said there was every indication that the men were illegal immigrants.

"If we are able to identify the smuggler as one of the survivors, I'm pulling out all the stops to prosecute him," he said. "This incident... shows the disregard these smugglers have for human life and usually, their own countrymen. They're preying on them like leeches."



In danger: John Shepherd (left), a volcanologist, and Frank Hooper, Montserrat's Police Commissioner, watching the volcano

Photograph: AP

Caribbean volcano set to erupt

Overston (Reuters) — People on the tiny Caribbean island of Montserrat were yesterday praying for an end to the rumblings from the Chances Peak volcano, which may be heading for what officials called a "climatic eruption."

Scientists at Montserrat Volcanic Observatory said they remained "gravely concerned" about the level of activity of the volcano, which roared back to life last week.

More than 4,000 residents of the British colony were evacuated from their homes on the southern side of the island on Wednesday and were living in shelters set up by the government. Many of the island's 9,500 residents marked Easter by packing churches to pray for an end to the volcanic activity that has been looming over their lives.

Some sermons also sought to reassure residents of the danger area, who spent last Christmas and New Year living in shelters because of the threat.

Scientists said they could not accurately predict when, or if, the volcano would erupt. On Saturday it spewed its largest column of hot ash to date, billowing as high as 30,000, according to scientists.

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Prince threatens to abolish tax haven

LOUISE

Willie State under week into British scandal. We demonstrate pending count a rep in its. The find in John Deit have own. The been agen

The absolute monarch of Liechtenstein is refusing — absolutely — to relinquish any of his powers, writes Imre Karacs

Vaduz — The floodlit castle of Prince Hans-Adam II hangs like an apparition above the jewelery shops that clutter the capital of his realm. It is perched on a sheer cliff, 500ft directly above the rooftops, providing a natural barrier to boomtown Vaduz.

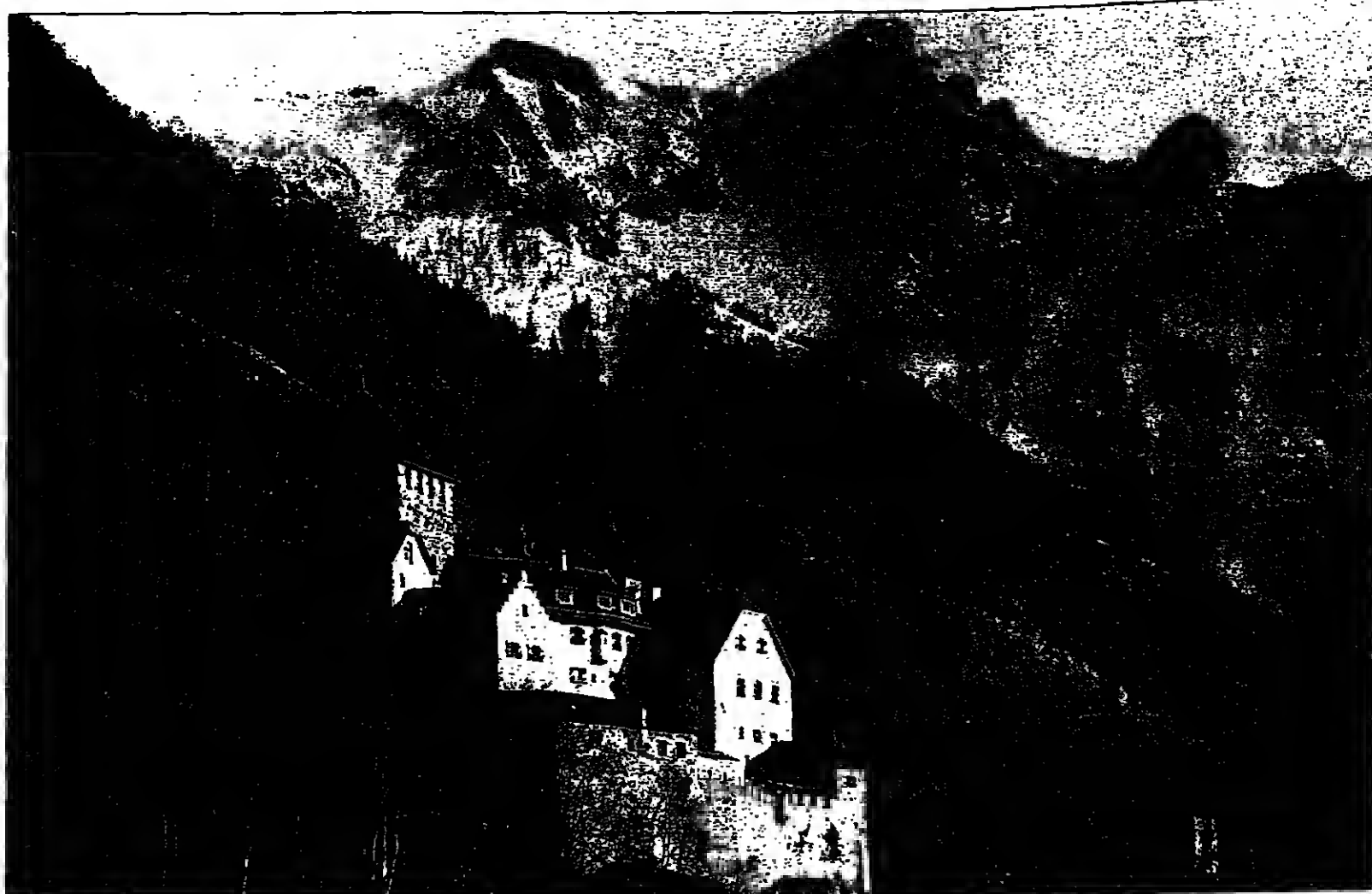
Generations of Liechtensteiners have basked in the

The 51-year-old Prince is outraged by efforts to drag his tax haven into the 20th century. The government would like to govern in tandem with the monarch; the Prince wants to preserve his absolute powers enshrined in the constitution. Under the present laws, he can rule by decree, dissolve parliament and government at will and throw back legislation which is not to his liking.

Since his ascension to the throne in 1989, Hans-Adam has used all these prerogatives with great frequency, provoking enormous opposition among his once dotting subjects. At first, the confrontations were on a Ruritanian scale. In 1992 he clashed with parliament over the timing of a referendum about membership of the European Economic Area, a trading block that encompasses the EU and members of the European Free Trade Association.

Both sides were in favour of membership, but the government wanted to hold the referendum after Switzerland's similar plebiscite, while the Prince decided Liechtenstein should hold the ballot first. The result was that the principality voted Yes, while the Swiss decided to stay outside, an outcome that vindicated the monarch but left his popularity in tatters.

He was booed in the streets and more conflicts were to follow, culminating in a suggestion from a senior judge that the Prince should be made accountable to the Court of Appeal.



Majestic sight: The prince's castle in Vaduz. His threat to move out has thrown the tiny state's financial sector into a panic Photograph: Katz

The Prince reacted in absolutist style, harring the author of the proposal, Herbert Wille, the presiding judge to the Court of Appeal, from a further term of office.

Mr Wille is taking his case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, but the Prince holds the trump card. Parliament, he told MPs last month, may tinker with the law, but he will only stay in Liechtenstein if "the monarch retains his existing constitutional tasks".

If he left, the country would have several options, the most obvious being to join one of the two neighbouring states, he added. "Of the two possibilities, I think joining Switzerland would be the more sensible alternative, not least because of the smallness of the country," he said. Liechtenstein already forms a customs union with Switzerland, and the national currency is the Swiss franc.

There is a catch. Even if the

country could survive as a republic, it might face economic turmoil. "The transformation of the principality of Liechtenstein into a republic would cause severe damage to its financial sector," the Prince predicted.

It was rather a neat way of saying "I am the State." For, Hans-Adam is Liechtenstein, not just because he lends the family name to the country, but also because he is, in effect, its largest shareholder. Without his cash piles, the people of Liechtenstein, who are among the richest in the world, would have to return to herding goats.

The principality's wealth flows from two main sources: the 70,000 letter-box companies "based" in Vaduz and the foreign money pouring into the accounts of native banks. One third of the state budget, which is controlled by the Prince and the government, comes from the foreign companies' registration fees.

Their importance to the economy can be gauged from the proliferation of brass plates at almost every available address. Liechtenstein has only 30,000 inhabitants, so competition for a friendly letter box is fierce. Even the brand new art museum in Vaduz has five company names on its front door.

The rest of the financial sector, which accounts for 50 per cent of the gross domestic product, looks after the money of tax-avoiders in other countries. At the centre of this web stands the LGT Bank in Liechtenstein, which is owned by the ruling family. The group, one of the largest in Europe, manages 55bn Swiss francs (£30bn) and made a profit of 129m francs last year. Naturally, the Prince pays no tax on his earnings.

The bank does not ask questions about where the money of depositors comes from, but denies it is handling the ill-gotten gains of crime syndicates. "This is a small place," says

René Ott, the bank's managing director. "Everybody knows everybody here. In any case, we are just passing a very tough law on money-laundering."

Whatever its colour, the foreign cash keeps Liechtensteiners in luxury. Work is a relative concept. About a third of all jobs are filled by commuters from abroad. The Swiss bring brains, the Austrians brawn, while the locals perform the duties in between, provided they are not too strenuous.

This could disappear if the Prince takes his business elsewhere. He has given his subjects one year to come up with a formula to keep him in the country, which only became the family's residence in 1938, when Hitler annexed Austria, the dynasty's homeland. He expects the two governing conservative parties to outbid each other in monarchist sentiment in elections due next March.

Paul Vogt, the only opposition MP in the 25-member parlia-

ment, believes that the ruler will prevail, because the people cannot afford to lose him.

"The monarchy is not under threat," he says. "First, there is tradition, and second there is the economy. The financial sector, the banks, want no turbulence, no negative headlines."

The trouble is that the turbulence comes not from popular demands to abolish the monarchy, but from the monarch's erratic statements. The Prince, whose function is to provide stability to Liechtenstein Inc, is undermining it by his tempestuous behaviour.

"His warning was not good for investor confidence — that's the problem with the speech," says a government source.

"Many people are beginning to say 'Let's get rid of him.' He predicted the Prince would ride out the coming year, but then will come the deluge. "After the elections something has to happen, because pressure from the people is growing," he says.



Prince Hans-Adam II: 'Back me or I leave'

light and wealth radiating from the ramparts, but the present incumbent could be the last of the line.

His Highness, the thirteenth reigning monarch, is so displeased with his subjects that he is threatening to move abroad. Without the Liechtenstein family, he told parliament last month, the 62 square miles of rock and the narrow strip of arable land along the Rhine might cease to exist as an independent state.

Film fantasy lures French to the Armagnac

MARY DEJEVSKY

When the French begin their great return to the cities today after the Easter weekend, a small strip of south-west France, in the heart of the Armagnac, anticipates a continuing bonanza. For, what Peter Mayle did for Provence, a recent film has been doing for the neglected region of Gers, and the tourists — this time not British, but French — are crowding the roads, packing out the restaurants and buying up the local fare with a zeal quite unsought by the natives.

A detour into the Armagnac has become *de rigueur* for residents of Bordeaux returning

from skiing weekends in the Pyrenees. Farmhouses and gites for the long summer holiday are rapidly booked up, and, horror of horrors, shops in the regional capital, which rejoices in the name Condom, say stocks of regional specialities, the Armagnac, the patés and even the foie gras, could run low.

The blame for this lies with a quintessentially French film, *Le Bonheur est dans le pré* — "Happiness is in the meadows", which has broken box office records wherever it has been shown, despite a panning from the critics. Released late last year, when the strikes were at their height, it was the only film to have people queuing down the Champs Elysées when

getting into the city centre at all was an act of heroism.

Now, 4 million have seen it, and it is the critics, not the film's producer and stars, who are in the dock. A crop of essays has been written in the tone of "Who do they think they are, telling us what we should like?" and addressing the perennial French question of a supposed gulf between the cultural elite and the masses.

In fact, plenty of the broader cultural elite praised the film to the skies, but they are not by and large the critics, who found the film "trite", "clichéd", "going for easy laughs", "like a Saturday night television comedy", "never engaging the intelligence of the viewer", and

more besides. The only award it took last month at the French Césars, a pale imitation of the Oscars, was "best supporting actor" for Eddy Mitchell.

There are ways in which *Le Bonheur est dans le pré*, which has now spawned an advertising catchphrase for the Paris public transport system ("happiness is not only in the meadows..."), merits all the adverse comments.

Yet the film reflects a set of hopes and dreams common to a large part of the French nation, prime among them the ideal of returning to the simple life in the unsullied countryside of childhood holidays. In the film, the dream and reality are brought up to date with a small-

town factory threatened with closure, a posse of malevolent tax inspectors, a loyal bunch of salt-of-the-earth employees, and the threat of unemployment around every corner.

Little by little, the put-upon manager, encouraged by a friend who introduces him to the delights of the Gers, starts to live a double life. He acquires a mistress in the shape of the local foie gras producer, an eligible widow living in a classically restored farmhouse, which was loaned from a British couple for the filming.

A convoluted tale of doubtful probability unfolds, involving gangsters, a suicide, laundered money and stomach-churning goose-innards.

But it is all treated with a Mediterranean cheerfulness and played against the green and golden meadows of the Gers. There is a happy ending that has jobs saved, husbands swapped, geese strutting by, and everyone settling back in the kitchen to unlimited foie gras and local wine.

Le bonheur est dans le pré makes people feel good to be French, so good, that when politicians started alluding to it in speeches, the leader of the extreme-right National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen, suggested an election might be on the horizon. But its real charm is that, for a couple of hours at least, it makes the French dream seem possible again.

Conviction boosts fight against Mob

ANDREW GUMBEL

Anti-Mafia prosecutors struggling to push ahead with the sluggish trial of Italy's former prime minister, Giulio Andreotti, were given a strong boost to their morale this week after they obtained a conviction and 10-year jail sentence for another key member of the Italian state apparatus, the former chief of Palermo's criminal police squad.

Bruno Contrada, a crucial figure in Palermo in the 1970s and 1980s who went on to occupy a senior position in Italy's intelligence services despite persistent doubts about his Mafia connections, was found guilty of passing on information to help mobsters evade capture and plan bomb attacks against their enemies.

His conviction following a two-year trial is the biggest victory yet for prosecutors seeking to unravel the web of links between corrupt state officials and organised crime in Sicily. In particular, they have established an important precedent for the admission of evidence from former Mafia bosses who have chosen to collaborate with the authorities. The case against Mr Andreotti, who is accused of being Cosa Nostra's godfather in Rome, rests on the testimony of many of the same Mafia turncoats who condemned Mr Contrada.

Defence lawyers in both the Andreotti and the Contrada cases have tried to accuse the turncoats of mounting a political plot against their clients in revenge for the break-up of their criminal careers. But the Palermo court appears to have accepted the prosecutors' argument that their witnesses had genuinely broken with their past, managing to produce telling stories even though they had no obvious means of communicating among themselves.

The turncoats, known as *pentiti*, have been breaking the Mafia's strict code of silence since the mid-1980s, but only began talking about their links with the police, the secret services and politicians after the post-war Italian order collapsed in 1992, saying it would have been

too dangerous to open their mouths beforehand.

The judicial system has been slow to process their revelations in the courts. Indeed Mr Andreotti's trial, which began last September under the weight of nearly 100,000 pages of damning evidence, has convened barely half a dozen times and is not expected to finish for another two years.

No witness has been heard



Giulio Andreotti: His trial is expected to last two years

since early January because the court has been waiting for a lawyer to recover from an eye infection. Mr Andreotti is now expected to be back in court in Palermo in the next week or two, while in the central Italian city of Perugia a separate trial is due to start in which he is accused of ordering the murder of an investigative journalist, Mino Pecorelli, in 1979.

Reaction to the Contrada verdict suggests that passions are likely to remain high, however. Supporters of the former prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, themselves targets for sporadic accusations of Mafia collusion, have attacked the verdict, saying it was based on circumstantial evidence. Indeed, the issue is likely to feature prominently in the general election campaign since Mr Berlusconi, who is standing for re-election, despite being on trial for corruption in Milan, has already accused sections of the judiciary of trying to target certain public figures, including himself, for political reasons.

Mr Contrada is now expected to return to jail pending an appeal.

Energetic Mr Nice Guy champions Italian left

After 50 years of trying in vain to win a general election, the Italian left does not have too many exponents blessed with the golden aura of success, but Walter Veltroni is unmistakably one of them.

One-time student activist, cinema critic, national newspaper editor, author of nine books on everything from television to Bobby Kennedy and now, with another general election looming in less than two weeks, candidate for the deputy premiership, Mr Veltroni has the kind of intelligence, energy and enthusiasm that any political party would envy. And the man only turned 40 last July.

Not only is he young and talented, he is generally considered to be the nicest guy you could ever meet — suave, well-spoken and unpretentious, a man who would far sooner drink beers and watch a movie, or see his footballing idols, Juventus, in action, than worry about the next hurdle to jump in his meteoric career. Politics, he says, is the one activity he could happily do without.

His political opponents are so unnerved by him that the only attack they dare make is that he is too nice, that his unrelenting pleasantness (*buonismo* in Italian) is somehow a handicap in the cut and thrust of political life.

Actually, Mr Veltroni packs so much activity into each day that some of his friends wonder if he is really human. (One of his nicknames is Kaiser Sose, af-

LOCAL HEROES: 11

Walter Veltroni

ter the super-gangster character in Bryan Singer's film *The Usual Suspects* who controls everyone and everything without ever revealing his identity).

So quickly did he rise through the ranks of journalism that he had been editor of *L'Unità*, Italy's biggest party newspaper, for three years before he found time to sit his professional exams. (He passed, of course.) Even in mid-election campaign, he still churns out editorials for other newspapers and cinema reviews for a weekly television magazine.

Mr Veltroni is a proud child of the 1960s, a man who started his political life as a 14-year-old schoolboy at one of Rome's most politicised high schools, infused with the spirit of Che Guevara, the anti-Vietnam war movement and avant-garde rock music.

A militant first for the Italian Communist Party and then for its successor movement, the PDS, he was never a fan of Soviet alliances, collectivisation and the dictatorship of the proletariat; instead, in common with the party leader he idolised, Enrico Berlinguer, he was an unabashed democrat who hoped to turn the Italian

left into a broad governing coalition like the US Democratic party.

At the helm of *L'Unità*, a position often used in the past as a springboard for left-wing leaders, he stripped the paper of its last vestiges of ideological warfare, making it clearer and more objective than many supposedly independent Italian titles and greatly expanding its cultural section. Circulation has boomed as a result.

In politics, he came within a whisker of taking over the PDS leadership following the party's defeat in the 1994 general election. He nevertheless remains deputy to his friend and fellow journalist Massimo D'Alema, and has been instrumental in forging a broad centre-left alliance, called the Olive Tree, to fight the present election. The centrist economics professor, Romano Prodi, is leader of the Olive Tree and its candidate for prime minister, but Mr Veltroni is a crucial prop and his number two.

The one thing Mr Veltroni lacks is an international profile. But, whether you realise it or not, he may have impinged on your life already: his was the first newspaper in the world to offer cut-price videos of classic films once a week, a highly successful marketing ploy that has caught on throughout the Italian media and now adopted in England by the *Independent*.

Andrew Gumbel



Sixties child: Walter Veltroni (left) with Romano Prodi, leaders of the centre-left Olive Tree alliance, listening to Lamberto Dini (top) Photograph: Domenico Sestilli / AP

Principles of passion and hatred

Bertrand Russell's vast contribution to Western thinking was largely a consequence of his personal loneliness and misanthropy, argues **Ray Monk**

Bertrand Russell was without doubt one of the greatest philosophers of the 20th century. His achievements rank him with those like Freud and Einstein, whose contributions to thought have shaped the intellectual atmosphere we all inhabit. What we now call "analytical philosophy", for generations the dominant tradition in Britain and the United States, was largely his creation. And the works that he produced during his most fertile period from 1900 to 1910 – *The Principles of Mathematics*, *On Denotation*, and (with Alfred North Whitehead) the monumental three-volume *Principia Mathematica* – stand comparison with any of the great works of philosophy of the past. His *History of Western Philosophy* is still the most widely read book on the subject, and the "pot-boilers" that he produced in the Twenties and Thirties – *Why I Am Not A Christian*, *Marriage and Morals*, *The Conquest of Happiness*, etc. – still sell in vast quantities. He is, perhaps, the only British philosopher to have reached a genuinely wide audience this century.

To many, however, he is known not for his philosophical work but for his political campaigning. During his extraordinarily long and active life (he died in 1970 at the age of 97), he led and inspired several waves of popular protest, ranging from the movement against conscription in the First World War to the campaigns against the nuclear deterrent in the Fifties and against the Vietnam War in the Sixties. Others know him from his appearances on the radio and the television, where, as a pundit on *The Brains Trust*, or as an interviewee on John Freeman's classic series *Face To Face*, his popular image was fixed as "the great philosopher on the telly", the urbane, witty and brilliant octogenarian with silvery white hair, an impossibly old-fashioned aristocratic voice and an impish and knowing twinkle in his eye that suggested that he would, given half the chance, "basilisk your girlfriend".

Popular images are notoriously difficult to shift, and Russell's has clung to his reputation ever since his death: the sceptical satyr, the embodiment of a kind of confident rationality that seems to belong more to the 18th century than to our own, more pessimistic age. He is, it seems, destined forever to be seen as a latter-day Voltaire. Indeed, I once interviewed an elderly woman who had known him well in the Forties, who ended almost every story she told about him with the exclamation: "He was Voltaire – *voilà!*"

Russell himself encouraged and played up to this popular image. Wherever he lived, a bust of Voltaire stood on his mantelpiece, and in 1958 he published (in French) an article called *Voltaire's Influence On Me* that emphasised the connections.

And yet, over the past six years, most of which I have spent researching and writing my biography of Rus-

sell, it has become increasingly clear to me that being Voltaire was, for Russell, an ideal rather than a reality. He wanted to be Voltaire, but actually felt himself to be more like a character from a Dostoevsky novel. He wanted to be ruled by cold reason precisely because he felt himself to be driven by deep, irrational fears and impulses, often so powerful and disturbing that they persuaded him he was going insane.

Russell had an extraordinary and disturbing ability to hide even his strongest feelings from those around him. When he was irritated, he could appear charming. When he was passionately aroused, he could appear coldly indifferent; when he was burning with hatred, he could appear jolly and even loving. It was a trait that had been built up from long years of isolation as a child, when, as he said later, "the most

thing down. Of the vast body of writing he produced in his lifetime (he published 70 books, 2,000 articles, and wrote well over 4,000 letters), an enormous amount is concerned with himself, revealing the feelings he kept hidden from those around him and trying to make sense of the conflicts that characterised his intellectual and emotional life. In his youth, for example, he kept a diary in which he set down his earliest philosophical thinking and the religious doubts that he hid from his grandmother (who, all this time, was persuaded that he was as pious as she was). And, later on, when his first marriage to Alys Pearsall Smith had deteriorated to a hollow shell, he kept another diary in which he expressed all the anger, irritation and even hatred towards his wife that he successfully concealed from her by an outwardly cold demeanour.

DH Lawrence once wrote to Russell with devastating insight and frankness: 'You are too full of devilish repressions to be anything but lustful and cruel It is not the hatred of falsity which inspires you. It is the hatred of people, of flesh and blood. It is a perverted mental blood-lust'

important hours of my day were those that I spent alone in the garden, and the most vivid part of my existence was solitary".

He was brought up by his grandmother, Countess Russell, the widow of the great Victorian Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, his mother having died when he was two, his father when he was three and his grandfather when he was six. Lady Russell was pious and sentimental, and Russell quickly learnt to conceal from her those thoughts and feelings of which she might disapprove, which included almost all the thoughts and feelings most dear to him.

Thus, he wrote: "I acquired the habit of deceit, in which I persisted up to the age of 21. It became second-nature to me to think that whatever I was doing had better be kept to myself, and I have never quite overcome the impulse to concealment which was thus generated. I still have an impulse to hide what I am reading when anybody comes into the room, and to hold my tongue generally as to where I have been, and what I have done."

Ironically, the result of this concealment is that Russell left a written record of his inner life that is matched perhaps only by the diaries of Virginia Woolf in its detailed self-absorption and its determination to document everything. Again, everything was committed to writing, since Ottoline would not leave her husband to live with Russell and

therefore their affair had to be conducted principally through correspondence. At the height of his passion – that is, for about two years – Russell wrote to Ottoline every single day, often two or three times a day, long letters, full of expressions of love, of self-analysis as well as detailed accounts of his day-to-day life. When things with Ottoline started to go wrong, however, Russell would write to her about how he did not want to feel anything, he wanted only to think. At such times, he would return to abuse and technical issues in philosophy and try to put his passionate love for Ottoline out of his mind.

Linked to this pendulum-swing between abstract thought and exuberant passion is the tension that existed between Russell's two great



FLETCHER SETHORPE

fears: the fear of loneliness and the fear of madness. For much of his life Russell felt, as he often put it, like a ghost, a quasi-substantial being, unable to make real contact with the flesh-and-blood creatures around him. His often desperate searches for love were a series of attempts to escape this spectral existence.

But, just as there are advantages of keeping one's deepest thoughts and feelings hidden, so there are advantages in being unapproachable, and counterbalancing Russell's dread of remaining in ghostly isolation was his fear of the forces within him that would be unleashed if he let himself be touched, if he made real contact with another. "It doesn't do for me to relax too much," he once wrote to Ottoline, "the forces inside are too wild – some of them

must be kept chained up ... I had thought possibly now I might let all the dogs have an outing, but some of them are mad dogs and are not safe to leave at large."

The intense passion that Russell kept locked up was, he often thought, akin to madness and frequently, when emotionally aroused, he thought himself on the brink of insanity. His Uncle Willy had gone insane and, after murdering a complete stranger, had spent the rest of his life hidden away in an asylum. Russell did not know this until he was 21, and ever afterwards his very deepest fear was of reliving his uncle's fate. This fear, he wrote later, "caused me, for many years, to avoid all deep emotion and live, as nearly as I could, a life of intellect tempered by flippancy".

Among the "mad dogs" that Russell considered unsafe to let loose were his often extraordinarily intense hatreds. As he himself once put it: "There is a well of fierce hate in me." One of the few people to see this was DH Lawrence, who once wrote to Russell with devastating insight and frankness: "You are too full of devilish repressions to be anything but lustful and cruel It is not the hatred of falsity which inspires you. It is the hatred of people, of flesh and blood. It is a perverted mental blood-lust."

How aware of the truth Lawrence came can be seen in a short story Russell wrote late in life called *Satan in the Suburbs*, the writing of which he said, was "a great release of my hitherto unexpressed feelings". The central character in the story, Dr Mallako, might be seen as a literal personification of Lawrence's phrase "devilish repression". "There is no human being, no, not one, whom I do not hate," Mallako declares. "There is no being, no, not one, whom I do not wish to see suffering the extremity of torment." When he explains why he feels this "well of hatred", Mallako describes a childhood that is, in essence, Russell's.

At the age of six, he says, he lost both his parents and was put into the care of a pious old lady, who "was persuaded that I was a good little boy. She adopted me, and educated me. For the sake of these benefacts, I put up with the almost intolerable boredom that she inflicted upon me in the shape of prayers and church-goings and moral sentiments, and twittering sentimental softness to which I often longed to retort with something biting and bitter, with which to wither her foolish optimism ... never for one moment have I been able to forget those early years ... the friendlessness, the dark despair, the complete absence of hope."

The picture of Russell's inner life one gets from this story is disturbing. And yet, as Russell realised, his well of hatred was, as he put it to Ottoline, "also a well of life and energy – it would not really be good if I ceased to hate". We are often told that repression is a bad thing, but it is massively to Russell's credit that he did not follow Lawrence's advice and release his "mad dogs", for, by keeping them enchained, he was able to redirect their frightening and fierce energy so that it was channelled into producing his unrivalled corpus of work, not only in philosophy, but also in politics, journalism and education.

Being Voltaire was an ideal, a mask, but when one gets a glimpse of what lay behind it, one can only be thankful that the mask was so rarely taken off and grateful for the work that was produced under its cover.

'Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude', by Ray Monk, is published by Jonathan Cape on 18 April, £25.



Rome diary

Olives: the political branch

It's Easter time in Rome, and there is a general election campaign in full swing: two events that sit uneasily together in a city where the Catholic Church has always taken an uncomfortably strong interest in local and national politics. In fact, celebrations for Palm Sunday almost ground to a halt last week because of an unfortunate overlap between the interests of church and state.

In Italy, priests traditionally give their parishioners olive branches, rather than palms, to commemorate Christ's entry into Jerusalem – a simple question of availability since palm trees are only found on the Riviera coast and in the deep south. The problem this year is that the olive branch has also been chosen by the country's main centre-left coalition as its election symbol. At first, the coincidence was treated as a good excuse for an April Fool's joke, and indeed a clutch of parishes around Lake Como in the north received a bogus letter from the Vicar-General of Milan urging them not to become unwitting instruments of electoral propaganda.

But then clerics started taking the problem seriously. One priest from the Regina Pacis church in Forlì, in central Italy, Don Michele Fusconi, hurriedly ordered some palm fronds up from the south, although he only found enough to distribute to the children. "The olive tree has become too political," he complained. Questions were even asked in the corridors of the dissolved Chamber of Deputies. "One of the most important Christian festivals is being hijacked for electoral purposes," fumed one conservative MP, Ottavio Lavagetti.

The row was eventually defused by the Vatican, which pointed out the absurdity of the whole affair. After all, priests were not exactly planning to distribute hammers and sickles. But one suspects conservative households will not be parading their olive branches in the next few weeks, much less keeping them until Lent next year, when the branches would normally be burnt in

make the ashes for Ash Wednesday.

Is the Pope turning pink?

Times have changed radically, however, since the first big left-right showdown in Italy between Communists and Christian Democrats in 1948. That was the beginning of the Cold War, and Italy was perceived as a crucial geopolitical domino. President Truman invoked the struggle of "Stalinism against God" and threatened to cut off Marshall Plan aid if the Communists won. Parish priests told congregations

they would go to hell if they voted the wrong way, and escorted their many illiterate parishioners into polling stations to help them put their crosses in the right place.

Now, of course, the Cold War is over, and neither the Communist Party nor the Christian Democrats exist in their original form. Indeed, there are as many Catholics on the left as there are on the right these days. Just last week, the Italian bishops' conference took a historic step by announcing that, for the first time, they weren't taking sides. Well, not officially anyway.

The church fathers have been hinting more and more strongly recently that they disapprove of Silvio Berlusconi (right), the conservative leader, whom they see

as too bound up in his own media interests and not concerned enough for the welfare of the whole community. The Vatican seems to have turned pink at the edges. Now that's what I call a historic turnaround.



Atypical humility

One way to gauge the political mood in Rome is to see where the parties have set up their headquarters in relation to the city's churches. In the past, the ever-ambivalent Christian Democrats were bang next to the main Jesuit church, Il Gesù, while the Communists, who always liked to think of themselves being a world away but in fact relied on their rivals more than they cared to admit, were just around the corner in Via delle Botteghe Oscure.

Now the centre-left has set up a temporary headquarters next to the church of the Santi Apostoli, an ancient structure first built by Emperor Justinian's favourite eunuch (the centre-left being forever afraid of political castration). Lamberto Dini, the outgoing prime minister, who has set up a socialist party of his own, is working out of two separate offices (an indication he could swing either way?); none of them is just around the corner from San Lorenzo in Lucina, parish church of a one-time mentor Mr Dini would probably prefer to forget – the disgraced former prime minister Giulio Andreotti, who is now standing trial on Mafia charges.

The only party that betrays no obvious symbolism is Mr Berlusconi's Forza Italia movement, which is housed in Via dell'Umiltà, the street of humility – one character trait even Mr Berlusconi's worst enemies would never accuse him of.

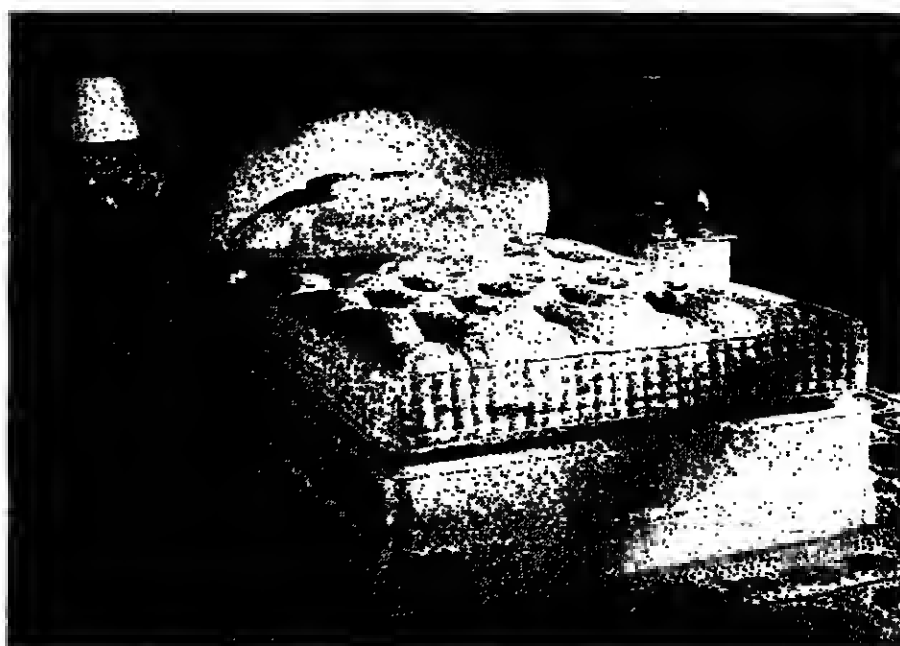
Andrew Gumbel



No taste for British lamb

For most Romans, Easter is mainly about eating oneself silly. Families will have stuffed themselves with fried lamb and special Easter cakes all day yesterday, and will be at it all over again today for the festival known as *Pasquetta*, or "Little Easter". Italy is not, as a rule, a big lamb-eating country, but Easter is something else. Of the 12 million sheep eaten in Italy around the year, one quarter are consumed over the Easter weekend alone. With the local market unable to cope with demand, that means imports from Britain and New Zealand. But the current season is anything but rosy. All week the papers have been full of reports that mad cow disease might be spreading to sheep. The rumors don't seem to have any foundation, but, just to make sure, a few enterprising Romans have been driving out to the country to have their hand-picked Easter Sunday lambs slaughtered before their eyes. "We picked the fattest one we could find," reported one couple, all the while clutching the mortal remains of little lambkins in four bulging plastic bags.

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Anyone can play Bible games

A text for Tony Blair: Matthew 23, verse 27. It's about Pharisees, those who wear their religion on their sleeves like an armlet. It's also about passionate hatred of hypocrisy, and impossible faith. Politics must, in our kind of society, be about compromise and pluralism, acknowledging that unbelievers and believers in different things outnumber Christians by a wide margin. Playing the Christian card may win a trick but – unless he is betting on some outburst of revivalism as we approach the Millennium – in our secular society it runs the risk of alienating the majority who are young, faithless and sceptical.

There is nothing wrong with pious politicians. On the contrary, anything that shows our leaders, and would-be leaders to have regular access to the Bible's rich, historic language, to have a life (or a claim on eternal life), is entirely welcome. But when politicians mount the pulpit, Matthew 26: 52 applies – those who preach shall be judged by higher standards. The Labour Party is a vessel made of clay. The pursuit of power, which is what New Labour is about, is always going to lead to muddled hands and moral ambiguity.

Tony Blair cuts an attractive figure. He has many of the qualities of a good teacher. He might be a model Sunday school teacher or even – impious thought – an artist's model for the hero of the feeding of the 5,000. But that does not excuse his Easter parade of Sunday school theology. That he has faith is well and good

but he must not insult our intelligence with platitudes about gospel socialism and an exegesis which ignores the entire church.

He has also opened a season of selective biblical quotation. Against Luke 12: 48 – from those who have a lot, much shall be required – the right wing will cite the materialism of Luke 20: 25 about rendering unto Caesar. Against the Sermon on the Mount the Tories will counterpose the verses saying Christ's kingdom is not of this world. And so on. It's a good game, which the left will generally win. But it's a game.

Tony Blair knows full well that no true Christian, one who actually lived a life of love and self-sacrifice would survive in politics. He or she would never speak ill of an opponent, which would make the hustings a waste of time. So we must assume Blair's foray into territory the right has traditionally kept for itself, writing moreover in a foggy right-wing newspaper, was a ploy. That reference to the misogynist St Paul coupled with his ethical apostle Lady Thatcher was carefully calculated to appeal to the hard-liners. There is a game plan here and a (diabolically!) clever one too, putting all those Tory Catholics and Methodists on the defensive.

Let us not be taken in however. This is politics as usual. Read John 13: 34, about loving one another. Anyone trying to live by that sublime injunction could never take part in Prime Minister's question time, on either side of the despatch box.

Feel-bad for Tories

Yesterday the nation's kids hunted for eggs, but now in other quarters the search is on for a very special delicacy. It's more savoury than a Perigord truffle, more valuable than a Beluga sturgeon; it needs to be handled more carefully than the grapes for a Trockenbeerenauslese. It is the green shoot – sweeter to Tory politicians than any new season's asparagus – of recovery in the "feel-good factor".

This is a versatile plant. It takes the form of increased numbers of golfers teeing off, record numbers breaking away for Easter, more staff at Dixons, greeters at Tesco, April changes in the tax code, maturing Tassas and – the most eagerly sought-after beast in the menagerie – signs of upturn in house prices.

These are a motley crew of indices. Some of them are solid enough, like the revival that is certainly occurring in certain regional housing markets, though only for certain categories of house. That

housing markets are stirring should come as no surprise to anyone who has read the Government's own projections for the numbers of households currently being created and how much they exceed the numbers of houses and flats currently available. That more people are taking holidays follows from the fact that national income has actually been rising recently, making us all better-off.

The science of feel-good is as fraught with indeterminism as quantum physics. Even if this past weekend had seen moving and stretching in the markets that were more than just spring springing, would that be good news for the Tories? The answer is no. Psychologists and students of political attitudes consistently say that feeling better may actually permit people to opt for the alternative. More important, having once felt had, electors do not let off the party responsible as soon as they feel the worst is over.

Poland's burden

A gaggle of pathetic skinheads they may have been, but that parade of Polish anti-Semites through the arch into Auschwitz was deeply repugnant. This was a dingy desecration that in itself deserves little more than passing contempt. Yet it has a context. It speaks ill of Poland. It was not just the evidence offered of the virulence of contemporary anti-Semitism. There was a worrying absence of Polish response. Where were the counter-demonstrations, the shocked reaction of Polish political leaders, the cardinals and the union leaders united in their determination to show the world how unrepresentative these neo-fascists are?

The Polish government may say that the issue of building a supermarket adjacent to Auschwitz is now closed. It may say that permitting a demonstration by ultra-

nationalists at Auschwitz was a sign of their country's growing political maturity. Poland, they will say, did not choose to be a principal site of the German extermination programme. Many, many Poles, they will say, suffered too.

Yet Polish history is too tainted by anti-Semitism for the country's government not to see they have special responsibility for Auschwitz. Poland aspires to membership of the European Union. There is talk of Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty. Poles need to see that these moves westward are conditional not on expunging groups that hate – all our societies have their hateful and hateful minorities, after all. What is vital is consciousness, about history and the special burden carried by them, the Germans and all those involved in the Holocaust.

Cruelty, still cruel after all these years

Round about this time last year BP published a full-page advertisement in the *Spectator* that proclaimed the message, "Thanks to BP you can now see a good clean fight at the Tate."

This was not, alas, a reference to any modern in-fighting at the gallery or a description of Brian Sewell waiting into battle against the Modernists. Half of the ad was devoted to the reproduction of a large oil painting by Johan Zoffany, called *Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match*. This little-known but attractive-looking canvas was painted in India two centuries ago, and shows a few British army officers and a lot of Indians preparing to watch two fighting cocks battle to the death, the gist of the advertisement being that good old BP had helped the Tate to clean up this latest acquisition, though not to buy it.

What sticks in my mind, however, is not so much the painting itself as the description of the painting offered by the copywriter. "Although by today's standards it's a cruel subject, emerging from years of grime is a brilliantly colourful, vivacious document of a great 18th-century social occasion."

I was brought up short by that description of the painting. Not the



MILES KINGSTON

grime bit. (Is a bit of dirt on a painting anything compared to an ocean-going oil slick?) Nor even by the startling idea that a cockfight run by some army officers way out in India was a great 18th-century social occasion.

No, I was brought up sharp by the idea that the painting had, by today's standards, a cruel subject. Yes, there are two cockfights in the foreground waiting to cause maximum damage to each other. Yes, a lot of people are standing around waiting to see the result. But surely not even an over-careful copywriter, or perhaps a faint-hearted director of BP, can say that by today's standards this is a cruel subject.

Even in an army context one can think of more cruel things. A painting by a modern Johan Zoffany entitled *Three Drunken British Soldiers Raping and Killing a Girl on*

Cyprus might strike one as a more cruel idea. And every night on the news there are much more horrific things reported, whether it be massacres in former Yugoslavia, or Dunblane, or murders in America, or road deaths in Britain.

But keeping it just to animals, the prospect of slaughtering half the cows in Britain, whose only crime was to have been born, is not one that I find easy to contemplate, especially when people like Stephen Dorrell say that the important aim is not to clean up the food chain but to restore consumer confidence. Let's cheer up the public – let's slaughter half a million cows! In human, and Eastside, terms, that's a bit like Pontius Pilate justifying crucifixions by saying that a bit of selective culling would raise public confidence.

In 1784 they set two cocks on each other, and BP is still apologising. In 1996 we turn a blind eye to, for instance, the horrible concentration camps known as chicken battery farms that dot our countryside behind barbed wire and "Keep Out" notices, and for which nobody apologises at all. People sometimes get hot under the collar if you suggest that there is any comparison between German concentration

camps and modern battery farms, but I disagree. I think the same dulling of sensitivity is involved, the same kind of inhumanity in being able to close your eyes to suffering.

Still, cruelty strikes different people different ways. Some people devote their leisure time to sabotaging fox-hunting, or trying to ban boxing. Others go to Madame Tussaud's. I was once taken there as a child. The horrific images of torture on offer in the Chamber of Horrors were enough to give me nightmares, and put me off violence and cruelty for life, even though many of those tortures were invented by one religion to deal with another one. In fact, I realise now that many of the images of cruelty I retain from my youth come from Christian sources – all those stonings, and burnings, and massacres, and hideous deaths from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* – and I can understand why many non-Christians sincerely find the sign of the cross a strangely cruel symbol for a major religion.

Or to put it another way, if BP had paid for the cleaning and restoration of a painting of Christ on the cross, I wonder if it would have occurred to them to apologise for what, by today's standards, seems a cruel subject?



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Western guilt buried in Bosnia's mass graves

Sir: Your leading article of 4 April (*"Justice in Bosnia"*) and Emma Daly's reports from around Srebrenica, are right to urge the international implementation force in Bosnia (I-FOR) to protect the mass grave sites around Srebrenica from further tampering.

The massacre in the "safe area" represents not simply the largest violation of humanitarian law in Europe since the Nazi death camps, but also the most shameful failure in the history of UN peacekeeping.

The UN International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague has indicated the seriousness of the crimes, speaking of "thousands of men executed and buried in mass graves, hundreds of men buried alive, men and women mutilated and slaughtered, children killed before their mothers' eyes, a grandfather forced to eat the liver of his own grandson. These are truly scenes from hell, written on the darkest pages of human history." (Indictment 12, 16 November 1995.)

Our belated attempts at atonement should go further than you suggest. A systematic international inquiry must be launched. Questions that need urgent answers include: Why did the Dutch Chief of Staff discover among his troops at Srebrenica "a euphoric mood that the Serbs were the good guys" (*the Independent*, 21 September 1995)? How can we explain the Dutch Defence Ministry's "misleading" of a crucial list of missing Bosnian men and boys and its destruction of a video tape showing Bosnian

Serb soldiers engaged in extrajudicial executions as Dutch UN troops looked on (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki report, October 1995)? And why did "a senior UN diplomat" claim that "Srebrenica was allowed to fall on purpose" (*the Independent*, 30 October 1995)?

Unless these and other questions are answered, members of the Dutch military, and the politicians who dictated the UN's response, can surely not escape the stain of association with these crimes.

THE WINTER
Chairman, Bosnia Aid
Committee of Oxford
Oxford

Sir: Your article about Sahnici One and "a crime too great to hide" (3 April) did not point out that Srebrenica, in addition to being a "safe area", also served as an armed camp for Muslim soldiers. These soldiers, as you acknowledge, attacked and killed Serbs in nearby villages. But these were not just isolated attacks for food. Many hundred Serbs in these villages were slaughtered in these continuous attacks, including women and children. The number of torched houses can be counted in hundreds.

So by all means investigate Serb killings and atrocities in the area and see to it that those responsible are brought to justice. But so that justice is seen to be done, the mass graves of Serbs massacred by Muslims in the surrounding villages must also be reopened, and charges brought

against those responsible. If justice is not seen to apply to all, then hatreds, alas, will continue to simmer, eating away at any prospect of peace.

R MARCENIC
Chairman
Serbian Information Centre
London W11

Sir: Ron Brown's plane crash in Bosnia provides a rare insight into how America uses military facilities to establish an early civilian presence in the reconstruction business. The White House calls the passengers "business delegates", and they included representatives of construction, engineering and telecommunications firms.

Ever since the Second World War, the American Corps of Army Engineers has provided bridgeheads into war zones, not just for soldiers, but for US engineering firms and contractors. By the time peace breaks out, these firms have already surveyed the damage, designed solutions and prepared business plans for the World Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Development Bank and other relevant funding agencies. Firms from the UK and other countries pick up the crumbs.

For many years the UK Association of Consulting Engineers, among others, has made representations to the Government about this. As far as I know, the Government still fails to acknowledge the situation, let alone consider a remedy.

JOHN WILSON
London W2

German lessons of BSE crisis

Sir: The BSE crisis raises fundamental issues about our regulatory systems and our presence in Europe.

The German Länder do not need the political support of the German government for their stand against international trading of British beef (report, 5 April). As regional governments they have the right under the derogation provisions of the 1990 meat hygiene directive to govern their own meat hygiene system, including slaughterhouse design and operation, ante-mortem and meat inspection, observing German federal law in respect of the maintenance of minimum standards, but able to provide, for example, for local small slaughterhouse systems linked to pedigree small herd production, butchering and marketing.

As in the UK, the scientific basis of meat hygiene has been absorbed in legislation and regulatory systems, which, like those of other EU member states, have in turn determined EU systems, including the wide margin that is maintained between risks of contamination and marketed products, based on information derived from continuous scientific research. Unlike the UK in the past 18 years, this information and the safety margin itself have not been distorted in favour of reduced regulation and self-management by major meat and feed production and marketing organisations.

JOHN PILGRIM
Bath

Sir: Organic farmers have long recognised the dangers of feed-

ing and injecting animals with unnatural foods and chemicals. They have sacrificed both numbers and time in order to enable animals to mature naturally and enjoy a reasonable existence before being slaughtered. The requirement to slaughter before the age of two-and-a-half years will mean in many cases that this regime will have to be altered to the detriment of both animal welfare and the quality of the beef. This is especially sad as I believe it remains the case that no beef animal raised organically has yet been reported with BSE.

It is not too late for this horrible affair to bring about a new attitude to the land and animals.

GODFREY MEYNELL
Kirk Langley
Dorsetshire

Sir: Your articles describe the planet's symptoms while ignoring the disease. Earth's cancer is humanity, breeding out of control and invading areas to the detriment of their inhabitants. The symptoms are death, famine, pestilence, and war. Not until we control our numbers will the apocalyptic horsemen rest. The Biosphere is fighting back with AIDS, BSE, cancer, TB, malaria and other diseases. Are we going to be culled, or control ourselves?

F HUGO
Southampton

Sir: Why all the fuss about the disposal of cattle carcasses? Surely the solution is to grind them up and feed them to sheep.

R I REILE
Pinner, Middlesex

Barristers must preserve independence from the CPS

Sir: As a barrister (and former solicitor) I agree with the Lord Chief Justice (report, 4 April), in opposing rights of audience being granted to employed lawyers – whether the employer is the Crown Prosecution Service or some other – and to solicitors unless they qualify in the manner provided. That only a few solicitors have sought higher courts certificates demonstrates that the

demand for them is very limited. It is important to preserve the independence of barristers so that those who prepare cases in the Crown Prosecution Service may receive independent advice. Suppose that a future prime minister was to appoint as Director of Public Prosecutions someone as determined on a particular course of action as, for example, the current Home Secretary. What

would happen when a crown prosecutor, employed by the CPS, thought his instructions from the DPP were wrong? Where would be the independence of action if the prosecutor had simply to act as the mouthpiece for the man he believed wrong in bringing or refusing to bring a particular prosecution before the courts?

STANLEY BEST
Winkfield, Devon

Talking 'green' on road to chaos

Sir: Having talked "green" in recent months, the Government has now shown its true colours with regard to transport policy ("Ministers axe plan to cut pollution", 2 April). In their woefully belated response to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report, the Government is apparently set to ignore most of the recommendations of the report it commissioned.

It fails to accept important targets for a shift from cars to other forms of transport in urban areas, and it hasn't decided whether or not to accept targets significantly to increase cycling. If the Government was less concerned about being portrayed as anti-car then it might find the time to be pro-railways, buses, cycling and walking.

Given this total lack of a coherent transport policy, it is not surprising that the Government has apparently removed the use of the word "integrated" from its document because it is too "socialist". Forward planning, future resources and local initiatives are other words that might qualify for expurgation.

What is needed, and what Labour will provide, is a national transport framework including targets for pollution reduction and the structures and policies that can achieve those targets at regional and local levels. The results of 17 years of drift in transport are all around us in pollution and congestion. They provide the most eloquent case for a new government to adopt an integrated approach across all means of transport and levels of government.

GRAHAM ALLEN MP
Shadow Minister for
Transport
House of Commons
London SW1

Keep the rescue services free

Sir: For about 20 years the question of compulsory rescue insurance (report, 6 April) has come up time and again. Rather than help the services involved, in a lot of cases it would do them financial harm.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution, for instance, acknowledged as one of the best such services in the world, runs on voluntary contributions given freely by its many supporters. Once people begin to start paying insurance they would not then be inclined to donate money as well. Business institutions would withdraw their sponsorships.

The military services we pay for in our taxes, and I am sure that the helicopter crews would be the first to agree that the jobs they do helping civilians enhance the skills needed in their role as search and rescue units for the military.

G LYNCH
Formby, Merseyside

Selected for classroom hatred

Sir: I passed my 11-plus, along with one girl in my school, in 1965 ("Is selection good for kids?", 29 March). The day the results were published our names changed to "Snob" and we were ostracised by our classmates for the remainder of the school year. Ever since then I have held an unshakeable belief that there must be a better way.

MARK BROCKBANK
Otley, West Yorkshire

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

0171 293 2056

The immortal but miserable Struldbuggs of 'Gulliver's Travels' are alive, unwell, and among us in the 1990s

How Swift's old-age horrors came true

I have been re-reading with astonishment that extraordinary part of *Gulliver's Travels* where he discovers men who cannot die. (Tonight Channel 4 shows the second part of a dramatisation of the book.) Astonishment because Swift is so prescient about what might happen if people did live for ever – or, as nowadays, survive for decades longer than was usual in his lifetime.

Gulliver is told about the Struldbuggs, rare children identified at birth by a red spot, denoting that they will never die. He fondly imagines that this must be the cause of great celebration, and conjectures on the wisdom that must reside in these ancient people. How happy must the Struldbuggs be "having their minds free and disengaged, without the Weight and Depression caused by the continual apprehension of Death."

His hosts listen with wry amusement, as he fantasises gleefully on what he would do, were he born in Struldbugg. He would start by amassing a fortune, which by wise investment would grow to astro-

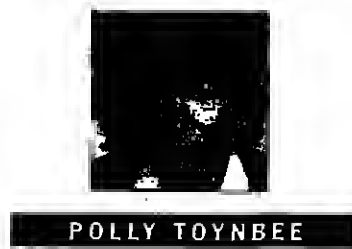
nomical sums over the centuries. (Swift is right – the greedy galloping pension funds will soon own every business on earth.)

His hosts disabuse him: they explain that the Struldbuggs have immortality, but not perpetual youth. When they reach 80, "they had not only all the Follies and Infirmities of other old Men, but many more which arose from the dreadful prospect of never dying. They were not only opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative; but incapable of friendship, and dead to all natural Affection, which never descended below their Grandchildren. Envy and impotent Desires are their prevailing passions. But those objects against which their Envy seems principally directed are the Vices of the younger sort."

How does Swift's state cope with these things? At 80 they are regarded "as dead in law: their heirs immediately succeed to their estates, only a small Pittance is reserved for their support" (equivalent to our state pension). Their marriages are dissolved at 80 since it is deemed an

unnatural cruelty to expect people to stay married for ever. (Modern divorce figures owe much to increased longevity and life expectancy.) The laws against the Struldbuggs' ownership of property spring from this idea: "As Advance is the necessary Consequence of old Age, those Immortals would in time become Proprietors of the whole Nation, and engross the Civil power."

So should we too start to fear the Grey Power of our rapidly ageing population? At the start of the National Health Service only 1 per cent of people lived to be 80, but there will be six times as many by early next century. Already the Queen is sending out telegrams to centenarians by the bagful. When we reach retirement, we will indeed prove ourselves to be a monstrous generation. We have shifted the culture of the nation in our favour every step of the way. First, when we were young, we brought power to youth for the first time. Now we take our dominant tastes with us as we go. By the time we reach 60, you can



POLLY TOYNBEE

I could take you to homes that would fill your heart with fear of too long a life

but we will have new laws preventing age discrimination or compulsory retirement. We will want to hold on to our jobs as long as we can. However much we fail in imagination and innovation, we will be good at blocking the rise of the puny generations below us, clothing our self-

interest piously in the sentimental language of "ageism", as if it were really as pernicious as sexism or racism, which it is not. Our economic hegemony will be at its most tyrannical when we become frail and the young in work will have to pay for our very expensive care.

It looks now as though the Government is about to make a fatal error in favour of the old and the middle-aged. John Major promises new schemes to allow the old to keep their property instead of spending it on the cost of care if they have to go into a nursing home. This will be of most benefit to my generation, who are insisting on the right to inherit their elderly parents' homes and capital, at a time in their middle years when they do not need it. They themselves will soon retire with these nice little nest eggs, while the young will pay more in their taxes towards caring for the decrepit.

So much for the politics and economics of the modern Struldbuggs. But what of the morality? Gulliver noted that the people among whom the Struldbuggs lived had lost their

fear of death, since they could see before their eyes the horror of perpetual life. He wanted to take a couple of Struldbuggs home so his fellow-citizens could also gaze upon their predicament and lose their fear of death. "No Tyrant could invent a Death into which I would not run with pleasure from such a life."

But we already have our Struldbuggs, hidden away from public gaze. I could take you to homes and psycho-geriatric wards that would fill your heart with fear of too long a life. Nodding, drooling, often wailing rows of Struldbuggs sit and wait for a death that will not come. With Alzheimer's now an epidemic, their miserable bodies have out-lived their minds, stray strands of awareness leaving them terrified in an alien world where they recognise nothing and no one. It is virtually impossible to get permission to film in such places, as, conveniently for their minds, it is claimed that they cannot give informed consent. But they should be seen, since politicians talk of the very old as if they were rosy-cheeked Derbys and Joans.

If they are both wise and kind, for their own sakes and ours, the younger generation should face the idea of euthanasia with less false moral squeamishness. I have never understood why a horse with a broken leg or an ageing incontinent pet should be afforded this mercy as a kindness, but not humans.

However, we are unlikely to be hard-headed and realistic enough ever to dare frame such a law. But as a matter of urgency, it should be possible for those of us who choose to sign a document demanding death once we are mentally beyond being able to make the request for ourselves. It is not enough to ask for no treatment, hoping that pneumonia, the old man's friend, will do the business. Many live on for years without the need for medication. Swift's message is that Struldbuggs both suffer and cause suffering all around them, and he would rightly have put them out of their misery if he could.

Extracts from 'Gulliver and Beyond', published by Channel 4 Television, PO Box 4000, London, W5 2GH, £4.95.

Will America pack up its troubles?

Washington and Europe are at odds over the West's continued involvement in Bosnia. Jonathan Eyal reports

Revelations that the US turned a blind eye to Iranian supplies of weapons for the Bosnian Muslims could not have come at a worse time for the Clinton presidency. For years, Washington had dithered between four contradictory policies in the Balkans: moral support for the Muslims, a commitment to the Europeans who had troops on the ground, a determination not to be sucked into the war and an official but sullen respect for United Nations resolutions, which banned the supply of weapons to any of the belligerents in the conflict.

Just like in Nicaragua, Cambodia and the Lebanon during the last decade, Clinton's attempts to square the Balkans' vicious circles have resulted in a laughable outcome: the same administration that argued for the supply of weapons to the Muslims in order to prevent Bosnia from falling under Islamic fundamentalist tendencies has, apparently, sanctioned arms sales from the most fundamentalist Middle Eastern government. And, undeterred, it is now the same administration which suggests that fresh weapons should be delivered to the Muslims in order to reduce this Iranian involvement.

European governments are "amused" to be surprised by these revelations; they suspected all along that strange deals were

being hatched behind their backs by the US. But the Europeans will be deeply worried by the fallout from this dispute, for the Balkans are now back on the political agenda in Washington during a presidential election campaign. From now on Clinton's options will be dictated more by what is popular at home, rather than what is feasible in Bosnia.

And the signs are that the President's choices will undermine rather than bolster the peace process. A fruitful policy would be the targeting of economic aid. Carl Bildt, the former Swedish prime minister and now civilian administrator of Bosnia, has spent the last weekend trying to persuade the US to support a programme of economic reconstruction: a bridge restored or a water supply reconnected in Bosnia will be much more beneficial than the obsession with high-profile political projects such as "free elections" in a country that has no law and no valid electoral rolls.

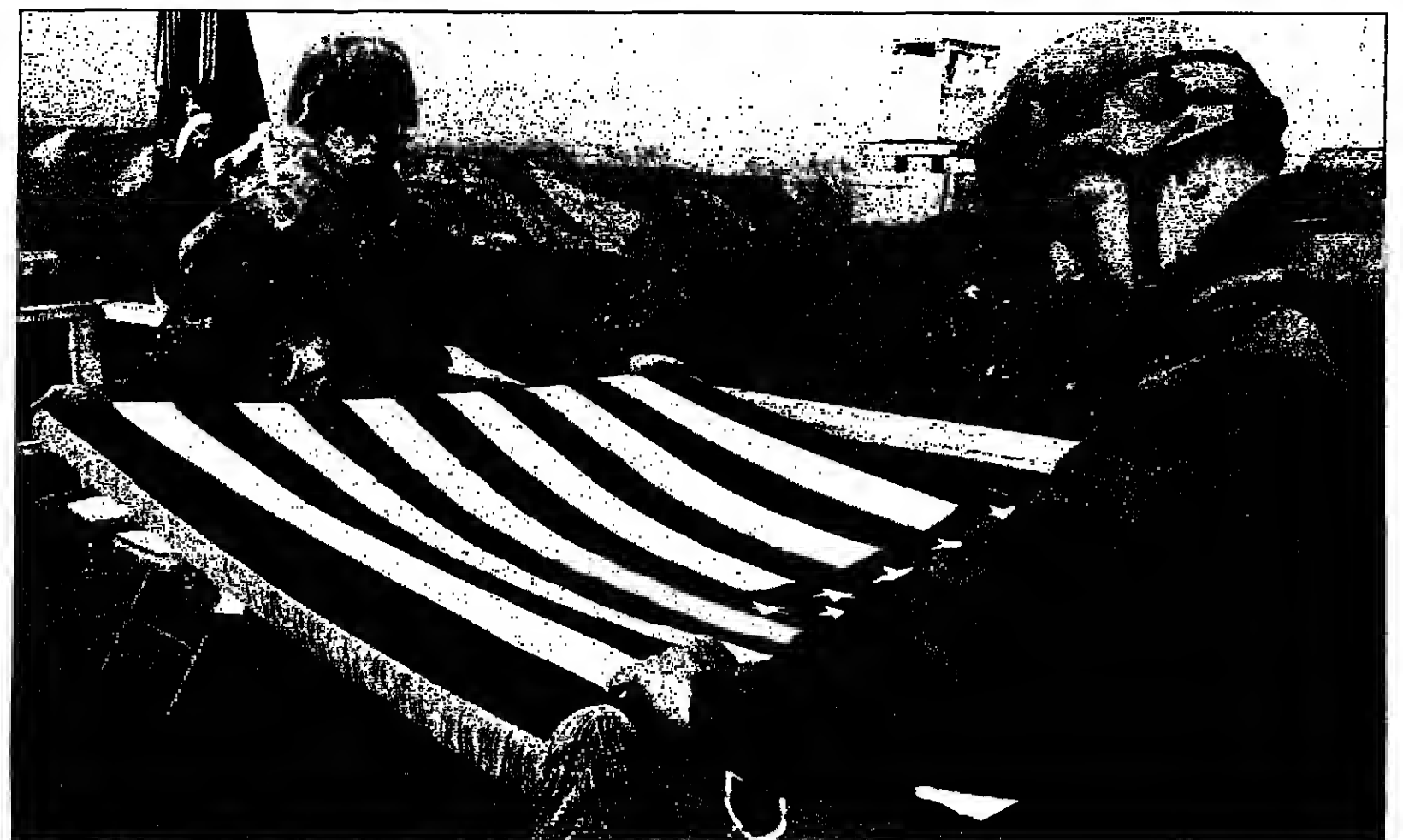
After a long period of dithering, the US administration managed to obtain from Congress authorisation to spend \$200m on such a programme, in return for a promise that American firms will get a substantial slice of the lucrative reconstruction contracts now in the offing. The Balkan tour of Ronald Brown, the US Commerce Secretary, was intended

to illustrate that Washington was serious about getting its "fair share" of this work. But the tragic end of this visit – in which a leading administration official and all his accompanying businessmen perished – has reinforced the image that the Balkans now amount to a mixture of bad policies and misfortunes wrapped into one. The idea that American companies will now rush to invest in Bosnia is fanciful.

So, instead of reconstruction from below, which will be slow in coming, the Americans are likely to insist on stitching Bosnia from above, by holding elections this September. Yet this can only aggravate the situation. With half the population displaced, the people of the divided republic will either elect representatives from constituencies in which they no longer reside, or vote where they happen to live now, which will be tantamount to accepting the results of ethnic cleansing.

The Europeans are fully aware of these dangers. Nevertheless they are doomed to follow America's megaphone diplomacy in the Balkans – promising the recreation of the Bosnian republic – while having none of the financial instruments to make inroads into the situation on the ground.

But this dispute pales into insignificance if compared to the other US tactic: supplying



American soldiers at Camp Bedrock, near Banovic, roll up the US flag after Easter Sunday sunrise mass

Photograph: Reuters

weapons to the Bosnian Muslims. From the American perspective, arming the Muslims avoids their worst nightmare. They are terrified that come the end of the year, when the troops have to be out of Bosnia, they will be forced to stay because their withdrawal could unleash another war. According to the US reasoning, therefore, if the Muslims have their own army,

Bosnia is rapidly becoming a nuisance for America

this will diminish Bosnia's dependence on foreign Islamic fundamentalists, spur military co-operation between the Muslims and the Croats and create what they gingerly call a "strategic balance".

Few arguments are more misconceived. First, there is no need to supply weapons in

order to eliminate Islamic fundamentalists: Nato has done this already and the Bosnians are forced to eliminate Islamic militias under the provisions of the Dayton accord. More importantly, far from strengthening Croat-Muslim co-operation, the supply of weapons will sever any chance of stability. The stronger the Muslims get, the more the Croats will be intent on crushing them, and the more an alliance between Serbia and Croatia against the Muslims becomes feasible.

Finally, Washington's claim that it knows a magic formula by which the Muslims will be supplied with just enough weapons to defend themselves, but not so many as to encourage renewed warfare was, and remains, nonsense.

For now, a stalemate continues: the Europeans are resigned to some rearmament of the Muslims, but hope that the White House will soon lose its appetite for the entire enterprise. If Clinton is re-elected, for instance, he will no longer have the same political

need to support the Muslims.

The biggest problem surrounds the military operation in the Balkans. Officially, the European military is determined to leave when the Americans withdraw. In practice, some European troops will have to stay. The question is: who ends up in charge? Just about the worst outcome would be one in which the Bosnian operation reverts to European command, for this would encourage American irresponsibility.

If a force remains in Bosnia, therefore, the Americans will have to remain involved. Nobody wants to discuss the issue: the Europeans hope that by keeping quiet, the Americans will be forced to stay, and Washington assumes that by officially sticking to the withdrawal timetable, it will get the Europeans to do more in the Balkans.

Franjo Tudjman, the Croat leader, and Slobodan Milosevic, the Serb strongman, follow this diplomatic piousness with great interest. Tudjman suspects that a rift between the

Europeans and the Americans will allow Croatia to impose its control over Bosnia. And Milosevic assumes that, once the US withdraws, the Europeans will allow Serbia to emerge from its isolation much faster.

Only the poor Muslims still assume that – despite all the current rows in Washington over their dealings with Iran – the administration will keep

US troops on their side for years to come. They are likely to be disappointed: Bosnia is rapidly becoming a troublesome nuisance for America, a conflict in which the best strategy usually consists of finding the nearest exit door.

The writer is Director of Studies at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

Cutting crime is an art best practised in prison

The majority of people in prison are young men without enough education or family life in their backgrounds to give them the knowledge or self-respect to lead useful lives. Their crimes involve drink, drugs and motor cars.

So to cut the crime rate, we must educate them morally and socially so that there is a better prospect of their behaving properly in the future. They will need to get and hold down jobs. They will need to be able to read and write and count, and to use their brains and hands in combination.

Prisons are noisy and overcrowded places. Prisoners are continuously under stress of one kind or another. One system of improvement is the practice of the arts: theatre, drawing and painting, writing, craft and music. All demand concentration and the reward the increasing skill of the performer. Theatre may have the most value – teamwork, words, speech, music, visual themes are all needed. The acquisition of even a modest skill gives satisfaction and self-respect.

So the first purpose of the arts in prison is to help with the main purpose of imprisonment: the reduction of future crime. Art in prison is a legitimate instrument for healing wounds. Most prisoners arrive to serve their sentences bitter and confused. From practising an art they derive a sense of order.

It is interesting to see what our greatest art therapist, the late Edward Adamson, had to say. He practised for many years in a mental hospital rather than a prison. But the principles he worked out and applied would be fit for hospital or prison.

He understood the importance of providing a sanctuary, a space in which the connection could be made between creativity and healing. His genius lay in his ability to create the "enabling space". He was a believer in what Jung called "the art of letting things happen".

Edward Adamson believed in the teacher not teaching but being as passive as possible, and never attempting to interpret the person's work, particularly when he or she was painting. He did not want pictures designed to please him but work designed to express quite freely the dynamics of the person's thoughts. They were tools for diagnosis by the doctors, but were also sharp and original works in their own right.

The best prison paintings give the prisoner some self-esteem. They help him counter the gloom of the prison. Their effect is to make him less likely to return to crime.

The effect on the artist is more interesting than the effect on the viewer. I recently judged a competition at a large London prison. There

Creative activities give inmates self-respect, says Judge Stephen Tumim

were three winners. One had painted an illustration to *Wuthering Heights*, with Heathcliff as a ghost crossing a stream followed by the heroine. "Why a ghost?" I asked. He explained at great length, but fairly convincingly, and then poured out the story of the murder he had committed, and his mental condition, the belief of a secure mental hospital that they could treat him successfully, the inexplicable transfer to a prison, the lack of further treatment. The painting and the prize he won for it had got him out of the stupor and got him thinking more clearly.

Another winner was a young man who had made a most accurate model of a caravan from matchsticks. He told me it was his family caravan. He was a gypsy, and he had lived in it in what he thought of as his peaceful period before his first offence. He wanted, he said, to return home.

The third winner was an enormous young man from Uganda. He had painted vast woods and forests in the style – slightly – of Gainsborough, and with the skies in the manner of Constable. How do you come to choose this style? I asked. "I am really an 18th-century man," he said. Rousseau would have been interested. He was recovering only very slowly from a drug-induced illness.

The succession of plays, mainly musicals, performed in the London prisons with the help of Pimlico Opera and other benefactors, has been remarkably impressive. I liked in particular the catalogues where the performers record their views of life. Listen to this one:

"I was born in St Anne's Bay, Jamaica. My mum and dad had me at an early age, she was 16 and my dad was 18. My dad died when I was four years old. My mum came to England when she was 20 to study to be an accountant. I stayed in Jamaica with my grandparents, aunts and uncles. When I was seven my mum came back to Jamaica to get me, which made me really happy because by that time I was always getting a beating and I was thinking that she didn't want me."

"Coming to this country was a big shock, but I got used to it. My first day at school was a disaster. It started as a fight and when I finally got

kicked out of school, it was for stabbing a teacher. I had just turned 12 years old in secondary school. After that it was children's homes then prisons. I started coming to prison because of the violence, but I soon met up with the wrong crowd and I started taking drugs and getting into more crime. That's why I am at Wandsworth now. At the moment I am trying to channel all my energy into something positive, *West Side Story*. The main reason is because everyone that I am working with are sensible and fun to work with. I am enjoying myself very much. I would like to say thanks."

"Prison art" is a misleading phrase. There is no art unique to prisoners. But if we believe prisons are intended to help prisoners lead law-abiding and useful lives, then we must recognise that we will not succeed without provision for the arts.

Yet government policy appears to involve saving money and looking for votes by cutting down on education and the arts in prison. That is the way to increase crime.

The writer was, until last year, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons. He will be the keynote speaker at the second European Conference on Theatre and Prison, which opens at Manchester University on Wednesday.

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obituaries / gazette

Greer Garson

Greer Garson was one generation's idea of a great screen actress. It's a view hard to sustain but, in the 1940s, the noble smiling of Garson or Joan Crawford was thought superior to the more subtle truths of, say, Ann Southern or Judy Garland. Unlike Crawford, Garson did reveal a lively sense of humour and she could be captivating on occasion. The key to her career was that she was in the right place at the right time. If she was lucky, then so was MGM.

She was a successful stage actress when the head of MGM, Louis B. Mayer, went to a West End play called *Old Music* (1937) on the (mistaken) assumption that it was a musical. Her performance impressed him enough to offer a contract, but his studio did not know what to do with a broad-faced, university-educated, slightly British actress, so, this being the era of typecasting, they saw her as another Binnie Barnes, whose forte was to chase after men, money or both.

Illness prevented Garson from following this path (the film was called *Dramatic School*) and she languished till Sam Wood cast her in *Goodbye Mr Chips* (1939), which he was to direct in Britain. She did not relish the role, since she was due to die only screen minutes after marrying and humanising the dry schoolteacher Mr Chipping. Robert Donat collected a popular Oscar for playing him, but Garson's brief contribution was equally vital. C.A. LeJeune, the film critic of the *Observer*, spoke of her "vivid grace" and Graham Greene admired "the short-lived wife [who] lifts the whole picture into a world of reality, common sense and tenderness, a sense of happiness too good to last".

On her return to Hollywood she was forced into the studio's chosen image - a New York sophisticate, jagged with sophisticated in huge hats - squabbling and making up with Robert Taylor in *Remember*. But her Mrs Chipping was uppermost in executive minds

when casting *Pride and Prejudice* (1940), based on a stage version which had been brought for Norma Shearer and Clark Gable. Garson and Olivier were much more sensible choices, even if Olivier later observed: "Dear Greer seemed to me all wrong as Elizabeth... she was the only down-to-earth sister but Greer played her as the most affected and silly of the lot". However, Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* wrote that she had "stepped out of one's fondest imagination: poised, graceful, self-contained, witty, spasmodically stubborn and as lovely as a woman can be." Nevertheless those who tend to Olivier's view sighed for her presence during the recent BBC adaptation, in which Jennifer Ehle completely missed Lizzie's sense of self-mockery.

Garson's performance reversed MGM's concept of her, and she replaced Shearer in the title role of *Mrs Miniver* (1942) when that actress refused to play the mother of a grown-up son. He was played by Richard Ney, who was actually years younger than Garson: 14, in fact, though at the time it seemed less, since MGM's publicists had lopped years off her age. She obliged them by waiting till the film had gone its rounds before making him her second husband, but as far as the studio was concerned the film had made her the biggest star on the lot.

It was a movie showered with Oscars, including Best Film, Best Actress (Garson) and Best Director (William Wyler). Garson made cinema history by making an acceptance speech that lasted 45 minutes, new rules were brought in to stop this happening thereafter. The story of an "ordinary" British family through Dunkirk and the Blitz, it struck a particular chord with the Americans, who had just entered the war.

Winston Churchill told Parliament that it had done more for the British war effort than a flotilla of destroyers. Yes, and Garson epitomised the courageous British housewife, the domestic ideal, partnering



In *Mrs Miniver* (1942), with Walter Pidgeon, Greer Garson epitomised the courageous British housewife

Photograph: LFI

the equally sunny Walter Pidgeon, with whom she was to make eight films in all; but what with Mrs M rounding up a German paratrooper in the garden and no mention of rationing it was hardly realistic. Wyler, when he arrived in Britain with the Army, admitted

that he would have made a very different picture if he had been here first. Better altogether was *Random Harvest* since, as adapted by the same four writers, including James Hilton (who had written the original novel as well as *Goodbye Mr Chips*), it aspired

only to romantic melodrama. Ronald Colman was the same, a nice officer who meets and falls in love with a music-hall star played by Garson on Armistice Day 1918 and marries her; and who later doesn't recognise her when she becomes his secretary. Accompanied by some public-

ity about the lady's short stage life and tight, the film was a second box-office bonanza (at a time when few New York cinemas showed their films for more than a week, these ran for 10 and 11 weeks respectively at Radio City Music Hall). MGM had forced Shearer

into retirement and had let Myrna Loy, "the perfect wife" go; Garbo had withdrawn for the duration; Crawford, who had hoped to inherit the mantle of Metro's First Lady, saw it (to her chagrin) bestowed on Garson, who also inherited a role intended for Garbo - *Madame Curie* (1943), with Pidgeon as Monsieur James Agate didn't care for it but took the occasion to observe that it was time "to recognise Greer Garson as the next best film actress to Bette Davis".

MGM had just signed her to a new seven-year contract without options, and reinforced her new persona, that of a patrician matronly figure, in two period family dramas, *Mrs Parkington* (1944), with Pidgeon, and *The Valley of Decision* (1945), with Gregory Peck. "Gable's Back and Garson's Got Him" was the way the studio publicised his first post-war film, *Adventure* (1946), but it was a slogan much derided - partly because the plot degenerated (depending on how you look at it) from romantic comedy to religious allegory, and partly because Clark Gable let it be known that he loathed it.

The movie marked the start of a gradual decline in Garson's fortunes, and the next, *Desire Me* (1947), was the only film to be issued without a director credit in the studio's history. This was hardly her fault, but co-star Robert Mitchum observed that she stopped taking acting seriously when she needed 125 takes to say "No". Garson and Pidgeon were put into a comedy in an attempt to change the image, but *Julia Misbehavior* (1948) was chiefly remarkable for ill-using its source, Margery Sharp's clever novel *The Nightingale*. Garson's fans returned when she played Irene in Errol Flynn's *Soames in That Forsyte Woman* (1949), based on part of Galsworthy's saga, but they stayed away from a more obvious attempt to retrieve them, *The Miniver Story* (1950).

With the exception of Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar* (1953), in which she was

Calpurnia, her last films for the studio were mediocre. She was considered for the role Grace Kelly eventually played in *Mogambo*, but the producer, Sam Zinbarg, considered her too mannered. Like Fox's Betty Grable, her only constant rival on the box-office lists, she had become a liability, but because their names had been so indelibly associated with these studios for so long, they were kept on well after they had outlived their appeal.

A Western at Warners, *Strange Lady in Town* (1955), confirmed this, and, having married a wealthy Texan, Garson didn't need to work. She accepted only occasional roles that she really wanted to do, including *Auntie Mame* (1958) on Broadway, replacing Rosalind Russell; Eleanor Roosevelt in *Sunrise at Campobello* (1960); an imperious Queen Mary, by this time a sort of alter-ego, in *Crown Marston* (1974), for television; and Aunt March in a television *Little Women* (1978). She spent her last years in Dallas, where her work for good causes was unstinting, including the campus theatre endowed in her name.

Joe Mankiewicz, who was at MGM at the same time, was once talking to me about its producers. "They all had a girl on the side. Eddie Mannix had - what was the name of that Irish-Jewish redhead?" "Greer Garson?" I ventured, wondering that what to me was one of the most regal of stars was to him just another half-forgotten "protegee". Could this be the same Greer Garson who indignantly rejected the self-parody number in *Ziegfeld Follies* written for her by Roger Edens and Kay Thompson, which Judy Garland so eagerly played?

David Shipman

Greer Garson, actress: born Co Down, Northern Ireland 29 September 1903; married 1933 Edward A. Snelson (marriage dissolved 1937); 1943 Richard Ney (marriage dissolved 1947); 1949 Elijah "Buddy" Fogelson (died 1987); died Dallas, Texas 6 April 1996.

Alistair Crombie

For more than 40 years, Alistair Crombie had an international reputation as a philosophical historian of science. His best-known work, *Augustine to Galileo* - a history of medieval and early-modern science - has run into three English editions, as well as French, Polish, Japanese, German, Italian, Spanish, and Greek translations, to say nothing of unauthorised printings.

The three volumes of his monumental work *Styles of Scientific Thinking in the European Tradition* - a history of scientific methods - were published in 1994, when he was 73. Not only does the book represent the culmination of a lifetime of scholarship, it raises historical analysis to the status of an anthropology of scientific thought.

Crombie was Australian and attended Geelong Grammar School and Trinity College, Melbourne University. In 1938 he went to Cambridge, where he pursued doctoral work in zoology. From 1941 to 1946 he carried out post-doctoral research at Cambridge Zoological Laboratory, publishing 11 papers on interspecific competition among insects and on the physiology of their chemical sense organs. During his laboratory years at Cambridge he also studied the history of philosophy under C.D. Broad, whom he greatly respected, and was much influenced by R.G. Collingwood, especially in his conceptions of historical method. In 1946, having decided to pursue a career in the



Crombie: *Augustine to Galileo*

history and philosophy of science, he accepted his first academic post in the subject, a lectureship at University College London.

It was then that he encountered some of the publications of Alexander Koyré and Robert Lehoucq. According to Crombie: Contact with these captivating intelligences was like Galileo's description of the stimulation given to the ear by the musical interval of the fifth, seeming at the same time to kiss and bite, at once seducing and awakening... It was especially Koyré who through his series of publications and his personal influence inspired those of us in Great Britain, as also in the USA and of course in France, who took up the subject professionally just after the Second World War.

The historical and intellectual sophistication of *Augustine to Galileo*, published in 1952, only six years after he had devoted himself fully to the history of science, and his *Robert Grosseteste*, published in 1954, reveal both

the fertility of these influences and the distinctive approach which he developed. For Crombie, the study of the history of science became at once a study of the content of science and of efforts to create rational methods of inquiry into nature.

While at Cambridge, Crombie met Nancy Hey and they married in 1943. Shortly afterwards Nancy became a Catholic and, some six months later, so did Crombie. They had five children. After the war Crombie spent some time in Germany rebuilding academic bridges, an experience which left a profound impression on him. He went on to spend seven years as Lecturer in the History and Philosophy of Science at University College London, in which time he served as Editor of the *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, before being appointed University Lecturer in the History of Science at Oxford in 1953. The university had been persuaded several years earlier to create a post in the history of science by Frank Sherwood Taylor, the future Director of the Science Museum, London, who was then the Curator of the History of Science Museum at Oxford.

Sherwood Taylor was also a Catholic, and Crombie frequently remarked that the history of science as a professional subject was created largely by Catholics and Jews. Crombie found the philosophers at Oxford most welcoming, in particular Gilbert Ryle, John Austin and William Kneale. With their help, the history of

science was introduced as an option into graduate studies in philosophy. Crombie also secured its introduction as an undergraduate option to Modern History and in Natural Science. Despite these efforts, the history of science remained a smaller subject at Oxford than at Cambridge. In 1962, jointly with Michael Hoskin of Cambridge, Crombie set up the *Journal History of Science* and remained on its editorial board for many years.

In Oxford, after an association lasting some years with All Souls College, Crombie became a Fellow of Trinity in 1969. Here, he was made very welcome, and the 10 years he served as the college's Garden Master, from 1971 to 1981, gave him enormous pleasure.

He always maintained strong connections with foreign scholars, especially in Italy and France, while at home on Boar's Hill he and his wife entertained a steady stream of friends and colleagues from home and abroad. She died in 1993.

Crombie was a controversial figure at Oxford, partly, perhaps, because of his almost exclusive dedication to intellectual work, and partly because of his indecate handling of the fabric of authority in the university. He felt keenly what he saw as a lack of interest in intellectual history in England, and he derived much satisfaction from invitations to give lectures and accept academic positions and honours in France, Italy, Spain, and Germany. His election to the Pres-

dency of the International Academy for the History of Science, which he held from 1968 to 1971, his appointment to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 1994, and the award of the European Prize for the History of Science in the following year were all marks of the reputation he enjoyed internationally. The seminar organised in Paris in 1995 to discuss his *Styles of Scientific Thinking* was particularly gratifying to him. Nevertheless, his work was appreciated in England. He received an honorary DLit at Durham University in 1978 and was elected to Fellowship of the British Academy in 1990.

In addition to his main books, Crombie brought out two collections of his published papers and a third is in preparation. In his final months he was engaged in writing two anthologies, *God and the Scientists* and *Shakespeare's Ethics*.

John Roche

Alistair Cameron Crombie, historian of science: born Brisbane, Australia 4 November 1915; Lecturer in History and Philosophy of Science, University College, London 1946-53; Editor *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 1949-54; Lecturer in History of Science, Oxford University 1953-63; Kennedy Professor in the Renaissance, Smith College, Massachusetts 1982; Professor of History of Science and Medicine 1983-85; FBA 1990; married 1943 Nancy Hey (died 1993); three sons, one daughter, and one son deceased; died Oxford 9 February 1996.

Dr William Styles

William Styles has been an important influence in the development of general practice in this country, particularly through the education of young general practitioners.

He entered general practice in 1968 at a time when its educational arrangements were in their infancy and when general practitioners were poorly regarded by many specialists. His vision of the potential for general practitioners to deliver high-quality care, provided that they had appropriate education, led him into a variety of posts. His particular concern was the quality of training for young doctors during their period in hospital, although he was later to broaden this into a strategic view of medical education for general practice.

His most public roles were in the Royal College of General Practitioners, whose North and West London Faculty he joined in 1977 and in which he held positions as an examiner and subsequently Honorary Secretary, Vice-Chairman and, from 1993, Chairman of Council. During much of this time he was also Honorary Joint Secretary of the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practitioners.

He was Regional Adviser for General Practice for the North West Thames Region for 13 years from 1983, with wide responsibilities for the provision of postgraduate education for general practice within that region. This gave him the practical background and close contact with working general practitioners which informed the development of his ideas.

Styles was well qualified for the positions which he was to fill. Having started his education at Dunfermline High School, he won Scholarships at both the City of Bath School and St Catherine's College, Cambridge, where he gained First Class honours in the Natural Science Tripos. He moved to St Mary's Hospital, London, to complete his clinical training and was there awarded the Harmsworth Scholarship before graduating in 1966.

He was an early trainee in general practice before this became mandatory and began work at the Grove Health Centre, London, with Dr Stuart Carne as his trainer. Dr Carne was closely involved in the Royal College of General Practitioners and later became its President. Styles joined the practice after his training was complete. The association was a fruitful one, and helped the practice to become the first in the country to achieve accreditation by the British Standards Institute, in 1994.



Styles: rights of patients

He continued to contribute to academic debate through numerous publications in medical literature and lectures, including the 1990 William Pickles Lecture, in memory of the first President of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

Styles was an advocate for the involvement of patients in their own care and for the rights of patients. He brought this perspective to a range of issues and it was recognised by the Medical Protection Society, of whose council he was a member since 1990, when it appointed him to become Chairman of its General Practice Advisory Board. He was also a member of the Board of Governors of Queen Charlotte's Hospital for Women 1978-83 and later of the Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Special Health Authority 1982-90.

His concern for standards was recognised by his appointment

in 1989 as a member of the Department of Health's Standing Medical Advisory Committee and in 1994 of the Clinical Standards Advisory Group. His services to the NHS were recognised in 1995 by his appointment as OBE.

Despite his professional commitments, he maintained interests outside medicine, including photography, reading and riding horses. He was strongly committed to family life and latterly enjoyed the company of his grandchildren. His appointment as Honorary Medical Officer to Queen's Park Rangers Football Club (1970-83) allowed him to combine medical and sporting interests, although he himself had played rugby while at Cambridge.

At a time when general practice is achieving the recognition for which he had worked so hard, Bill Styles's early death has robbed it of an important leader. His courage in facing a long illness, resulting from cancer of the colon, has been an example to many of his friends and colleagues. During this time he relied heavily on his own general practitioner and in a moving recorded address to a college meeting in November, he reminded his audience of the importance of the personal doctor in such circumstances. The abiding memories of him will be of his contribution to medical education, his ability to manage his enormous workload and of the humour with which he dealt with people and problems. His laugh, a unique characteristic, will long be remembered.

John Toby

William McNeil Styles, physician: born 22 March 1941; general practitioner 1969-96; Regional Adviser in General Practice, North West Thames Regional Health Authority 1983-1995; partner, Grove Health Centre, 1989-1995; Honorary Secretary, Royal College of General Practitioners 1983-89; Chairman 1993-96; OBE 1995; married 1969 Jill Manderson (one son, three daughters); died 8 March 1996.

John Snagge

I met John Snagge in 1975, at the Star and Garter pub at Putney, writes Sidney Vines [further to the obituary by Leonard Miall, 28 March].

In the first half hour we each consumed four double whiskies. After this, I was walking on air, but retained enough wit to keep my tape recorder running for the profile interview (for *The Field*) which was the

purpose of the meeting. He was then 71, in good trim, and his eyes twinkled with humour. He was full of good stories.

After a broadcast by Winston Churchill during the war, the Prime Minister turned to Snagge and poured him a glass of champagne in an enormous balloon. When Snagge murmured, Churchill turned on

him. "You will drink this and you will enjoy it. If you do not it will go down the drain - without of course going through the usual channels."

During the Coronation in 1953, Snagge described the service from a box above the high altar in Westminster Abbey. He told me: "All went smoothly until I said 'the Archbishop now moves to the high altar for

the introit 'O God our defender.' The Archbishop was out of my sight, when to my horror, I heard him say 'Let us pray'."

I thought 'Oh my God, I've done it. They've altered the service and not told me.' There was a deathly hush which seemed to go on for ever, but in fact was only about 30 seconds, then to my intense relief I heard the

words of the introit 'O God our defender'."

A few days later he met the Archbishop at Lambeth Palace. The Archbishop explained that he had turned over two pages of the service, but that his chaplain had corrected him. How had Snagge filled the gap? "I did what you told me - and no one in the Abbey prayed harder than I did."

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Prince of Wales visits the Forth Bridge at the North Cumbria, North Queensland, as President, the Prince's Trust, visits the Kirkcaldy Ferry, Kirkcaldy, as President, Scottish Business in the Community, visits the Type Community Centre, Abbotsford Estate, Dumfrieshire, and visits Cullin.

Changing of the Guard The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. 1st Battalion Welsh Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. Band provided by the Irish Guards.

For Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS, please telephone 0171-293 2811 (answering machine 0171-293 2812) or fax to 0171-293 2010.

Birthdays

Mr Tony Banks MP 53; Mr Hywel Bennett, actor, 52; Sir Andrew Bowen MP 66; Mr Graham Burton, ambassador to Indonesia, 55; General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, 72; Mr Julian Lennon, rock musician, 33; Air Commandant Dame Alice Lowrey, former Matron-in-Chief, PMRAFNS, 91; Miss Carmen McRae, jazz singer, 74; Mrs Mary Moore, former Principal, St Hilda's College, Oxford, 66; Mr Garth Morrison, Chief Scout, 55; Miss Virginia O'Brien, actress and singer, 75; Sir Michael Sachs, High Court judge, 64; Mr Charles Saunders, former film director, 92; Mr Ian Smith, former prime minister of Rhodesia, 77; Mr

Alec Stewart, cricketer, 33; Sir Thomas Thomson, physician and gastroenterologist, 73; Miss Dorothy Tutin, actress, 65; Mr Ian White, MP 51.

Anniversaries

Births: Claudio Merulo (Claudio de Correggio or Merlotti), organist and composer, 1533; Philip IV, King of Spain, 1605; Cornelis de Heem, still-life painter, 1631; John Claudius London, horticulturist, 1783; Sir Frederick William Burton, painter, 1816; Karl Evers, pianist and composer, 1819; William Henry Welch, pathologist, 1850; Edmund Husserl, philosopher, 1859; Harvey Williams

Cushing, neurosurgeon, 1869; Albert I, King of the Belgians, 1875; Victor Scherzinger, film director, composer and lyricist, 1880; Walter Connolly, actor, 1887; Sir Adrian Boult, conductor, 1889; Mary Pickford (Glady's Smith), actress, 1895; E.Y. "Vip" Harburg (Isidore Hochberg), lyricist and librettist, 1898; Dita Chase, novelist, playwright and actress, 1903; Sonja Henie, skater and actress, 1912; Deanna Caracalla (Marina Aurelia Antoniou), Roman empress, 217; John II, Byzantine emperor, killed by accident 1143; Marie-Jean Antoine-Nicolas Chiriac, Marquis de Condorcet, mathematician and revolutionary, 1794; Wilhelm, Baron von Humboldt,

philologist, 1835; Domenico Gaetano Maris Domizetti, composer, 1848; Elissa Graves Oels, inventor of the safety lift, 1861; Heinrich von Stephan, politician and promoter of the Universal Postal Union, 1897; Baron Roland Ertova, physicist, 1919; Charles Tomlinson Griffes, composer, 1920; Edwin Cannan, economist, 1935; Adolph Simon Ochs, newspaper proprietor, 1935; Sir William Henry Hadow, author and musicologist, 1937; Eugene Fomich Nijinsky, dancer and choreographer, 1920; Pablo Ruiz, y Picasso, painter and sculptor, 1913; Omar Nelson Bradley, general, 1911. On this day: Florida was discovered

by Juan Ponce de León, 1513; the Prince of Wales (later George IV) was married to Caroline at Brunswick at the Chapel Royal, St James's, 1795; the steamship *Great Western* began her maiden voyage to New York from Bristol, 1838; Ponchielli's opera *Le Olicondra* was first performed, Milan, 1876; Herbert Henry Asquith became prime minister, 1908; over 200 people were drowned after the collision of a Nile excursion steamer near Cairo, 1912; a treaty was signed between Colombia and the United States agreeing control of the Panama Canal Zone, 1914; the first London production of the musical play *White Horse Tea* was staged, 1931; King Zog of Albania left

his country, following the Fascist invasion, 1939; the final assembly of the League of Nations was held, 1946. Today is the Feast Day of St Dionysius of Corinth, St Julia Billant, St Perpetuus of Tours and St Walter of Pontione.

Employment Appeal Tribunal

The following have been appointed Members of the Employment Appeal Tribunal:

Employer Members: David Chadwick, Iain Enckel, David Hodgkins, Olaf Palmer, Peter Parker, John Rivers, John Shingley, Employee Members: Peter Jacques, Gavin Lahr, Barbara Switzer, Robert Thompson.

Church appointments

Canon Trevor McCabe, Vicar, Manacuan with St Anthony-in-Meneage and St Martin-in-Meneage (Turo), to be Archdeacon of Cornwall. Canon Mervyn Bunting, Vicar, St Cuthbert, Copnor (Portsmouth), to be Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight.

Service appointments

Major Gen C.G. Callow, to be Director-General Defence Medical Training. Brigadier W.R. Short, to be Director-General Army Medical Service in the rank of Major General.

0171 293 2811

DIY disaster: Investors lose patience with beleaguered chain's slender margins as competition from B&Q and others grows even stronger

City presses WH Smith to dispose of Do It All

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Pressure is mounting on WH Smith to close or sell the heavily loss-making Do It All chain of DIY warehouse stores. An upturn in Easter trading may be too late to save the struggling brand. Sources believe a strategic review of WH Smith may signal an early exit from the heavily overvalued home improvements market.

The City's "iv" wants Bill Cockburn, WH Smith's chief executive, to get rid of the problem quickly, either by closing it down or selling it at a knock-down price. "Do It All's margins are among the worst in the sector, if not the worst," one institutional investor said at the weekend. "The losses being made seem bottomless."

Half-year results published in January showed that Do It All, which is jointly owned by WH Smith and Boots, suffered losses of £7.7m, up from £3m the year before, with sales down 3.2 per cent.

With no prospect of being able to stem the outflow, in-

vestors have started to lose patience with WH Smith. Unlike its partner, which benefits from the strong profits and cash flow of Boots The Chemists, it is unable to continue carrying the pain of its disastrous foray into DIY. WH Smith suffered total group half-time losses of £45m, up from £17m.

Mike Dennis, analyst at NatWest Securities, said that despite DIY chains' "slash and burn" attempt to cut costs and close sheds up and down the country there remained far too much capacity. Do It All is one of the market's four big players, the largest of which is B&Q, owned by Kingfisher. The others are Homebase and the struggling Texas chain, both subsidiaries of Sainsbury's.

Competing with the four majors at the heavier end of the business come DIY companies such as Wickes and builders merchants like Travis Perkins and Jewson, part of Meyer International. Wickes' recent price-cutting and advertising battle with B&Q underlined the intensifying competition that

threatens further damage to Do It All, which as the industry's poor relation has little buying or pricing clout.

Nick Bubb, analyst at Mees Pierson Securities, believes things could get worse. "If B&Q's market dominance and profitability is under general threat, its reaction may be to get more aggressive," he said. The Kingfisher subsidiary needs to reassert its leadership after the embarrassing failure of Sir Geoff Mulhally to endorse the position of B&Q chief executive Jim Hodgkinson after press reports suggested he might be forced out of the company.

WH Smith sources said none of these rival operators had approached the company about buying Do It All. In fact, it is thought that WH Smith has not received an offer from anyone for the chain. Mr Dennis believes that Do It All's rivals are probably strong enough to ride out the remainder of the recession and hope the weaker chains go to the wall. They may then cherry-pick some of Do It All's better stores.

Homebase, currently converting the Texas stores it bought from Ladbroke last year for £290m, has been a good example of how to manage a chain through the recession. Homebase has been one of the most profitable outlets of the past six years, and has seen profits rise from £22m in 1994 to £31m last year, with a further increase to £37m pencilled in by analysts.

With such strong competitors in the market, many analysts believe Do It All's 190 stores should be closed. But with stores on an average lease of 10 years, some estimates put the cost of closure at well above £200m. One WH Smith insider said: "Analysts say just get rid of the problem - close it. But the costs involved mean that is not a realistic option. We do, after all, have a duty to shareholders."

Another option is to continue trading and hope that things pick up. But Mr Cockburn, fresh from running the Post Office and with a mandate to change things, is unlikely to adopt the do-nothing approach.



Cut-throat competition: Kingfisher's B&Q chain is closely watching Do It All's fate

Photograph: Geraint Lewis

Commercial property rents poised to take off

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

The commercial property market is poised to enjoy its highest growth in rents since the late 1980s boom, according to figures from a leading property industry consultant.

Healey & Baker expects rents for prime buildings to rise by 7.5 per cent, twice the rate of increase in 1995 and the best performance for seven years.

David Hutchings, head of investment research at the firm, said: "We expect 1996 to see continued low interest rates, sustained economic growth and low inflation."

"The three together should produce a healthier level of tenant demand and increase the numbers of buyers and sellers in the investment market."

If the property market does pick up, it will be a welcome relief to the industry which has struggled to come to terms with plunging activity levels and lower prices.

Firms of surveyors freely admit that they have been slow to adjust their cost bases to reflect what pessimists see as a permanent reduction in business.

Mr Hutchings added: "Optimism that rents should see a

robust short-term recovery is now shared by many property owners."

"Occupier sentiment and viewings are improving. Average yields are close to borrowing costs and bank finance for new development is becoming available as the supply of quality real estate continues to shrink."

The figures from Healey & Baker chimed with a recent report from UBS, the broker, which forecast total returns from direct property investment this year of between 10 and 11 per cent, rising to 15 per cent in 1997.

That, the firm said, would compare with returns of only between 6 and 7 per cent from shares and it recommended institutions to increase their weightings in property. For many reasons, including the fundamental illiquidity of the property market, pension funds and insurance companies have been reducing the proportion of their assets represented by property for many years.

Institutions have also been put off by the poor long-term investment returns that property has offered in recent years. In the 1990s, so far, the annual average return on equities

has been 12 per cent compared with just 4 per cent for property.

Bears of the sector believe that even if rents do start to rise again, capital values could continue to fall as the yields demanded by investors continue to rise.

The negative argument claims that with 25-year leases a relic of the past, and little inflation, buildings are now much more affected by maintenance costs, depreciation and obsolescence. That must be reflected in a higher income yield.

Grimley, another property consultancy, contributed to the hull argument last week, however, saying headline rents for central London properties had increased by 16 per cent over the past two years with rises of over 30 per cent in the City and Mayfair.

It added that employment forecasts for the next two-year period suggested a shortage of prime space would emerge, adding upward pressure to the best buildings.

That is a trend that has been evident for some months now as a two-tier market has emerged in the sector. Older properties, without

the facilities that modern organisations demand, are expected to face increasing difficulties and Grimley expects permanent over-supply to be a feature of the market.

That has led to an increase in attempts to convert older office buildings for other uses. Peninsular Heights, a conversion by Regalian of a Thames-side office tower into luxury flats, is one example.

Britannic Tower, former headquarters of BP in the City, was recently acquired by Wates for conversion into a mixed-use site.

Adding to the hullish assessments of the market's prospects, property agent Richard Ellis said this week that the central London office market had experienced its highest quarterly level of take-up of space for more than two years. It also pointed to high levels of activity in the investment market.

According to John Slade, head of City investment: "The improvement in the central London investment and occupation markets reflects continued economic growth, with decisions which have been put on the back burner for some time now being made."

IN BRIEF

• Rentokil will increase its bid for BET later this week but probably by no more than about 10p a share, sources close to the deal believe. Advisers think that a small increase in the terms of Rentokil's offer will be enough to bring institutions on side. The offer now on the table, nine Rentokil shares and £8 cash for every 20 BET shares, values BET at 206p, just 1p below BET's closing price last Thursday. Friday is the last day on which Rentokil can increase its bid and the company is expected to wait until the last moment before making an announcement of its final offer.

• Boots could enter the power generation business in a small way, it emerged yesterday, thanks to a £19m mini power station the company is building at its 300-acre headquarters site at Beeston, near Nottingham. The facility will save Boots about £3m a year in energy bills and could allow it to sell any spare power into the National Grid. Currently Boots spends about £4m on power for the Beeston site, which employs 5,500 in four factories, warehouses and the head office.

• Dixons is planning a £100m expansion plan over the next two years that could involve the creation of up to 4,000 new jobs. The retailer's growth will be driven by a rapid increase in the number of PC World computer stores and a further roll-out of the new communications outlets trading as The Link. Dixons expects the number of PC World stores to double to 60 by 1999, while The Link could treble the 50 sites it currently operates. The company has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of a 71 per cent rise in the value of the retail market for personal computers as well as a big increase in the popularity of mobile phones.

• Tax self-assessment began this weekend in a shake-up of the Inland Revenue that could involve up to 9 million of the UK's 30 million taxpayers having to keep much more detailed and extensive records and risking being caught up in an expected sharp rise in the number of Revenue investigations. At the end of the current tax year, taxpayers face a choice between sending their return in earlier or working out how much tax they believe they owe.

Our share tips off to a good start

There is a reassuring quality to the new year tips race we launched at the beginning of the year. The highly paid fund managers we entrust with our pensions are leading the field; the random selection of our Business and City Editor's four-year-old daughter is, to the relief of the experts, bringing up the rear; and the recommendations of the Independent City desk are nicely ahead of the market.

As the charts show, the 10 fund managers who kindly put their necks on the block in the name of festive fun have proved their worth with an impressive 13 per cent capital gain in little

Tom Stevenson reviews the new year portfolio and is relieved to find the pros haven't been outdone by a four-year-old

higher newspaper prices to announce record profits. Well done to Richard Lehman of Royal Insurance, Lloyd's Bernard Clark, Tom Crombie at Scottish Equitable and Philip Winstan of BZWIM for those four tips.

The others have some catching up to do in the remaining nine months of the year, especially Tomkins and BTR, two well-managed but out-of-favour conglomerates that have re-

mained in the doghouse so far. Our own City Desk is quietly confident about its own performance, with a 6.6 per cent share price rise on average, almost twice as good as the market as a whole.

Leading the pack, Stakis has benefited from a dramatic upturn in the fortunes of the UK hotel industry and especially from the Government's proposals to relax the regulation of casinos.

The focus of packaging group Field on the profitable niche of health-care-related work and its refusal to take on low-margin business has highlighted its at-

by her selection of Mirror Group, which owns 43 per cent of Newspaper Publishing, publisher of the Independent, but she has reason to be pleased with the trajectory of her pen because the shares have risen 24 per cent so far this year.

For a random selection, she chose a fair array of good performers including Next, motor dealer Quicks and Guinness Peat, all of which have started the year well. Florence's dog has been Powerhouse, formerly Com-Tek Resources, which asked for its shares to be suspended on 1 April pending publication of its accounts for the year to last

September. The suspension price was 50 per cent below the level of the tip.

In addition to the three actively chosen portfolios we also offered a selection of shares arrived at using the investment theory of a US investor, Michael O'Higgins. He chooses shares on the basis of

size and yield, looking for large, safe, but out-of-favour companies that might be expected to bounce back into the limelight.

Translated to the UK market, his technique involves selecting the 10 highest-yielding stocks from the FT-SE 100 index and then whittling this group down to just five shares by picking those with the lowest prices.

Using the technique at the end of 1995 came up with the shares in the table. Sadly the theory, which has a good track record, appears to be having an off-year. The mean capital gain was just 3.5 per cent, in line with a dull FT All-Share index.

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Ancient voyage of discovery

New research suggests Australian aboriginals may have migrated to the Americas 14,000 years ago. **David Keys** reports

Walter Neves keeps 40 skulls belonging to the world's most ancient Aborigines in his office. They are all stored neatly in his computer. But it is not the hi-tech, 3D storage of aboriginal human remains that is causing ripples. It is the fact that all the skulls come not from Australia but from South America.

For Dr Neves, Professor of Biological Anthropology at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil, believes that America was discovered not by Columbus or the Vikings, or even by the ancestors of today's American Indians, but by Australian-style Aborigines.

His research strongly suggests that the first Americans were Australoid peoples – not Mongoloid peoples, as has always been assumed.

By analysing the multi-dimensional images on his computer screen and comparing hundreds of ancient skulls from all over the world, Dr Neves has found the only exact match for his early South American examples are ancient skulls from Australia. The morphologies are identical. "We were very surprised by what we found," he says.

Dr Neves points out that before East and South-east Asia were taken over by the ancestors of today's Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and other Mongoloid peoples, the region was inhabited by peoples similar to the Australian Aborigines. Ancient aboriginal-type skulls have been found in China and Korea. He believes that Australia and adjacent islands are merely the last surviving territory of a once-vast aboriginal



homeland that covered much of East and South-east Asia.

And he is convinced it was aboriginal colonists from this "Greater Australia" who first set foot in the New World and became the first Americans.

The migration may well have been sparked off by a conflict between the aboriginal population of East Asia and the expanding Mongoloid peoples.

Mongoloid peoples probably developed somewhere in the ultra-cold wastes of central Siberia, perhaps 20,000 to 40,000 years ago. Then, proba-

bly between 15,000 and 20,000 years ago, they began to expand their territory at the expense of early Australoid peoples.

Dr Neves suspects that this expansion may have driven the Aborigines into the New World.

Mongoloid tribes also entered the Americas later, and he believes these later arrivals, who became the American Indians, drove the Aborigines into the least desirable areas, where the majority died out. Most of his American aboriginal skulls date from 14,000 to 10,000 years ago. After that

date, most ancient American skulls are Mongoloid in type.

In a remote area of central Brazil, in the state of Minas Gerais, Dr Neves is excavating caves and rock shelters in the hope of finding fresh material.

Brazilian researchers are also combing the world's museums for ancient American skulls. So far Dr Neves has tracked down material in Scandinavia, Britain and the United States.

But it is among living peoples that Dr Neves may find the most exciting evidence that Aborigines were the first discoverers

of America. In the southern part of South America are two ethnic groups that may well be the last survivors of the first Americans. In southern Brazil, Dr Neves suspects that the Je Indians still preserve some aboriginal traits – both physically and linguistically. And in southern Argentina and Chile, he believes the last pure American Aborigine – a Tierra del Fuego Indian – died just 30 years ago, although mixed-race Tierra del Fuego people still survive, preserving an ethnic heritage of probable Australoid origin.

Australia's Aborigines – and their near relatives, the Melanesians – may now not be alone as the sole survivors of the Australoid race.

The aboriginal achievement is breathtaking in more ways than one. Some 60,000 years ago – more than 20,000 years before humans reached Europe – Australoid people started long-distance sea travel, using primitive boats to make what was then an 80-mile voyage to the island continent of Australia.

The evidence collected by Dr Neves suggests that they had

Are they Aussies? Natives of Tierra del Fuego in a 19th-century illustration. Museum of Mankind

reached the Americas by at least 14,000 years ago.

The major remaining question, then, is how did they enter the Americas? Australoid peoples were not adapted to cold weather like their putative Mongoloid rivals and would have found it difficult to cross over into the New World via what is now the Bering Strait – the route that the ancestors of the American Indians are believed to have taken. The Australoid colonists may have used their maritime skill and experience to take a more southerly route – island-hopping all the way from East Asia to North America.

It is possible to travel from Malaysia, New Guinea or Australia all the way to the North American mainland, arriving in Alaska at a relatively low latitude (equivalent to central England), by island-hopping. Using the Indonesian, Philippine, Ryukyu, Japanese, Kuril and Aleutian island chains and archipelagos, the 4,000-mile journey can still be undertaken with no single sea voyage of more than 120 miles.

The proposal that Australian-style Aborigines discovered America is likely to prove controversial.

But it is already gaining some tentative academic support in both the United States and Australia. "It is an exciting new theory with interesting support not just from fossil material but also from living peoples in southern South America," said Dr Alan Thorne, an anthropologist at the Australian National University in Canberra. An early Australoid migration to America is "a reasonable possibility," he says.

They're big, they're black, they're increasing – so shoot them?

Anglers say cormorants are damaging fish stocks and should be culled, but ornithologists want them protected. **Martyn Kelly** reports



Black plague? A cormorant can consume up to two pounds of fish per day. Photograph: Planet Earth Pictures

The trout fishing season started last week on many large reservoirs in southern England, with many anglers concerned that the fish stocks they have paid to conserve for their sport are being damaged by cormorants.

Last August, Henry Bailey and Bill Griffiths were acquitted by Loomister magistrates for a crime they both admitted committing. They had shot three cormorants they said were causing serious damage to fish stocks in the River Wye. Shooting the birds was not a crime in itself; they had a licence from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF). What incensed conservationists was that the licence stipulated that 28 days had to elapse between each shooting, whereas Bailey and Griffiths had killed all three birds within a fortnight. It was the first time the so-called "farmer's defence" – whereby an animal can be shot if it is causing a nuisance – had been extended to fisheries.

The problem has pitted anglers and ornithologists – two of the largest and most powerful countryside lobby groups – against each other. Robin Wynde, of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, puts the conservationists' case: "The cormorant is big, it's black, it's conspicuous, it's increasing. People think that because these birds eat fish and are increasing, they

must be damaging fish stocks. That's not necessarily the case." David Bird, a former president of the National Federation of Anglers, says, "We're looking at waters where the only change is the arrival of cormorants. There is no change in angling activity, no pollution, no degradation of water and so on. So I discount looking at non-existent other causes."

Recent research by Dr Mark Feltham, of John Moores University in Liverpool, showed that a cormorant can eat up to two pounds of fish per day. But, Dr Feltham points out, not all of this will be species of interest to anglers. Moreover, artificially stocked still waters can act as aquatic "larder tables", attracting cormorants with easy pickings.

That the problems caused by cormorants – termed the "black plague" by the angling press – are increasing, both Wynde and Bird agree. The first recent records of cormorants breeding inland was 1981, when the Wildlife and Countryside Act became law. Previously, cormorants bred around the coast but not inland. However, Wynde explains, the cormorant is not a purely marine bird. "That perception is a result of the level of persecution to which they have been subjected inland and the availability of food and habitat." Suitable habitats were created as a by-product of other conservation schemes and the

Wildlife and Countryside Act prevented indiscriminate shooting. The nine pairs nesting in Essex in 1981 increased to 19,000 by 1990.

To be issued with a licence to shoot birds, a fisheries manager must prove, to the satisfaction of the Government's agricultural advisory service, that cormorants are causing serious damage. The licence allows birds to be shot but as a means of scaring the colony rather

than culling, and only when other means of scaring can be shown to have failed. Wynde and the RSPB say the system is too lenient and that fisheries managers can get a licence based on anecdotal evidence.

Bird rejects this. "Good observation is an important part of natural science. Why is it wrong in this case?" The problem, he says, is that hard evidence of serious damage can only be shown retrospectively, and meanwhile

angling clubs and owners of fisheries will have suffered losses. "One of the reasons the RSPB says, 'No, you can't kill them', is they couldn't face their membership if they had to say, 'Right, there has to be a cull'."

The RSPB begs to differ. "We are not opposed to the principle of licensed control under certain circumstances," explains Wynde. "Control of cormorants should be of small numbers, to assist with scaring

rather than to control population. Culling, in our terms, is population control and we don't believe that that is appropriate."

Both sides must now wait three years for the results of a £1m research project funded by MAFF. "If in that time angling clubs and commercial fisheries have gone out of business, who will reimburse them?" Bird asks. "It won't be the RSPB and it won't be the bloody government."

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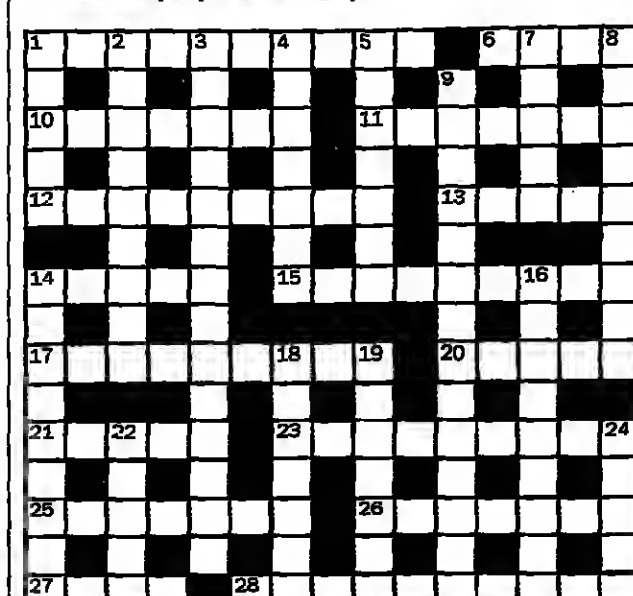
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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2955, Monday 8 April, Easter Monday

By Fortia



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Saturday's solution

